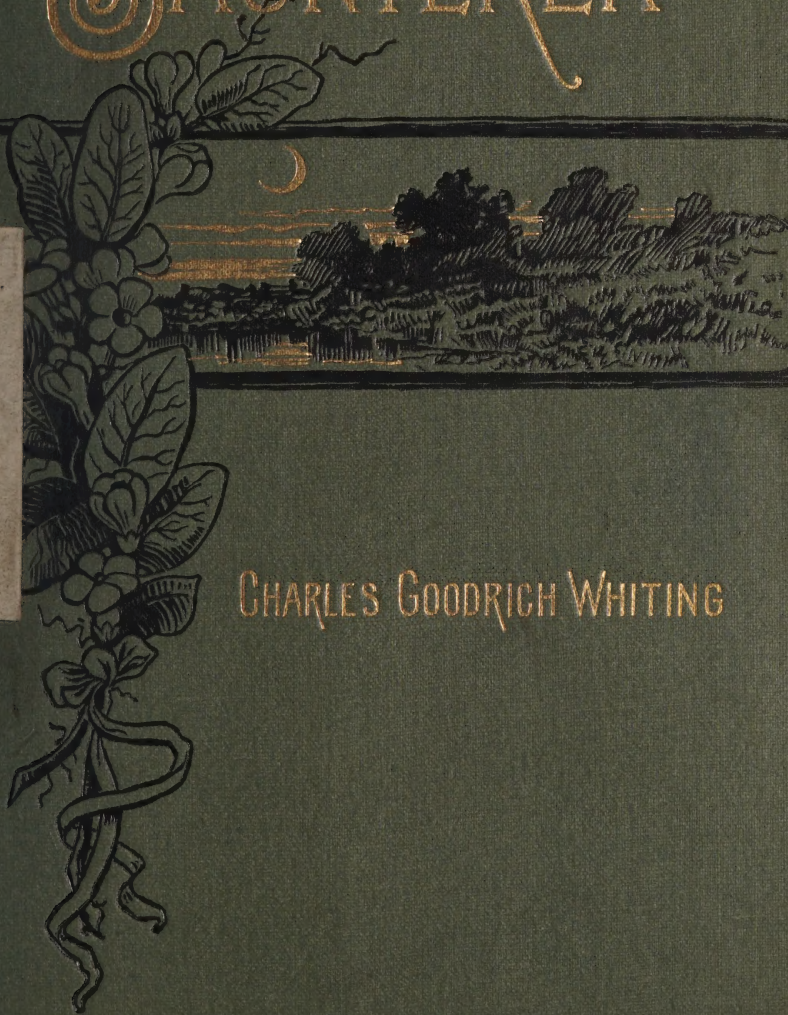
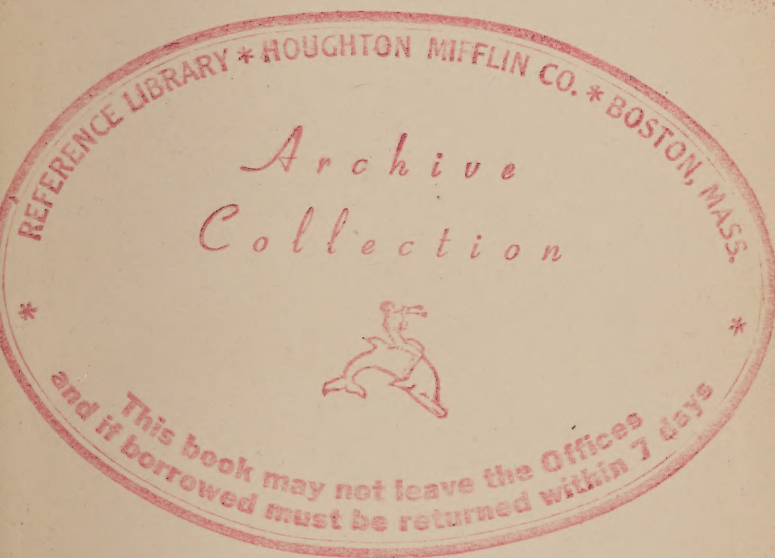


THE
SAUNTERER



CHARLES GOODRICH WHITING



THE SAUNTERER

BY

CHARLES GOODRICH WHITING

"Tell men what they knew before;
Paint the prospect from their door"

EMERSON



BOSTON
TICKNOR AND COMPANY

1886

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CONTENTS.



I.

THE NEW LIFE: IN FIELD AND FOREST.

	PAGE
The Line-mark	3
Trailing Arbutus	4
March Hope	5
Woodchuck Wisdom	7
Easter	9
The Bluebird	10
A Vernal Hymn	11
In Payment	14
Awakening	15
April Coquetry	16
Maple Sap	19
Flower of Peace	21
Nature holds Levee	22

	PAGE
Brave Robin !	23
The Eagle's Fall	25
Elective Affinities	26
The Caged Bobolink	29
Salve ! Reverentia	32
To Each its own Life	34
Forbearance	36
Nature and Man	37
For Ronald in his Grave	41
A Memorial Rose	42
Ab Imis ad Summos	43
Immanuel	44
Summer drops in for a Call	46
"The Soote Season"	49
A Love Song	52

II.

FULNESS OF JOY: ON HILL AND SHORE.

The Joy of June	55
Old Lovers	59
Nature's Infinite Leisure	61
"Woodman, spare that Tree !"	62
Soul of the Spell	66

	PAGE
Expectant Dawn	67
For what Earth Waits	68
Morning Fog	70
Upon the Ledge	71
Wild Strawberries	72
Twilight Charm	77
Nocturne	79
Eyes for Seeing	80
A Morning Dream	82
Serenades : —	
“ Oh the lady I dream of is fair ”	83
“ Sleep! sleep and dream ”	84
The Scythe out of Fashion	86
Woe in the Nest	91
July Showers	92
Conventions	94
The Woodland Brook	95
Sundown Mountain	96
Mountain Wind	98
The Breath of Nature	100
Sea-shore	101
Resting or Waking	105
Hylas !	106
Flotsam	108
“ Dogtown ”	110
Catechu from the “ Peruvian ”	111

	PAGE
Religion Afloat	116
Thomas à Kempis's Mistakes	118
The Girls of Bethany	120

III.

REPOSE AND RIPENING: FOR EARTH AND
MAN.

August Rest	125
Floating Clouds	127
Crows in Congress	128
The Moral of Scarecrows	130
Plow-plight	131
Changing Lights	133
Blue Hills beneath the Haze	135
The Passing of Summer	136
My Good Friend !	139
The Soul's Loneliness	145
The Love that Lasts	146
"Le Désir"	148
Sublimations	150
Juliet	152
Ophelia	153
"Let the Forest Judge"	154
Summer Thefts	157

	PAGE
At the Fence Corner	158
Four-leafed Clover	161
Light and Mirage	163
Golden-rod	164
The Woodsy Autumn Air	165
The Lying Dream	166
Under the Harvest Moon	167
Sturgeon-hunting and Birch Canoes	171
Buckwheat Bloom	175
The Bumble-bee	176

IV.

HARVEST ACROSS LOTS: OF LIFE AND
THOUGHT.

October Sweetness	181
Fall Sunset	183
Aftermaths	185
Jean Paul's Consolation	187
A Friend in Paradise	188
Mid-fall	190
Ripening Autumn	192
The Spell of Dropping Leaves	194
The End of the Glory	196
A New Moon Missed	197

	PAGE
Her Death-night	198
Not in Man's Temples	199
Counterfeit Lightning	201
Indian Summer	202
The Beautiful Stranger	204
Merry Christmas !	206
Mystery in Childhood	208
Home	210
The Child's Secrets	212
What More ?	214
The Child's Fears	215
Childhood's Metaphysics	218
Its Natural Philosophy	220
He Wanted Wings	221
Man's Disobedience	222
The Real End	224
Failure	225
Masquerade	227
The Price	228
The Fight for the Standard	229
Winter Spirit	231
The Gloaming	233
Morning in the Slums	235
The Church of the Poor	236
Poor Children at Play	238
By Homely Haunts	240

V.

THE JOURNEY: HERE AND HEREAFTER.

	PAGE
The January Thaw	245
Within a Year	248
Midwinter Morn	249
The Elm in Winter	251
Mist and Moonlight	252
Night	254
A Funeral under the Snow	256
Finite into Infinite	258
Shadow and Fear	260
The Phantom Train	262
The Pageant	265
My Soul and I	266
Lustration	268
After this Earth	269
The Way to Heaven	273
The Art of Living	274
Gone from the Glory of the Earth	276
The Power of Music	277
Beethoven's "Sonate Pathetische"	279
All Music has its Place	280
A Thought of Schumann	282
The Chippeway Standards	283

	PAGE
The Donkey and the Bobolink	285
The Dance	286
After the Ball	287
Art's Deeper Meanings	288
With a Copy of Shakespeare	289
Strength and Weakness	290
Charity	291
Grave Meditations	292
Is this the Story of the Soul?	296
Mysteries of Dreams	297
Invocation	302



O SACRED COUNSELLOR !

INSURGENT years, O sacred counsellor !
Have borne thy pupil into many schools,
And taught him of the wisdom that befools,
And made him folly's slow inheritor.
Far from thy wise integrity the war
Of errant passions, and the strife that cools
Youth's heart, — from out the placid pools
Upon the turbulent current tossed afar, —
Have hurried him; and never to that rest,
Perchance, his soul may hopefully return
Ere this brief earth his dying eyes shall spurn.
Yet it shall be that of his work the best
Bears still thy impress; and his heart shall burn
Ev'n in its ashes thy dear praise to earn.

I.

THE NEW LIFE

IN FIELD AND FOREST.



THE SAUNTERER.

I.

THE LINE-MARK.

OVER the confines of winter we step into spring, — much as, in a country sauntering, we pass an inconspicuous gray stone and are in another town, although the grass and ferns and blackberry-bushes, the rocks and chipmunks and companionable brook, do not convey any intimation of it. Such a gray stone is the midnight between February and March; it has its legal and worldly conveniences, like the other, but is nothing of real consequence. In truth, we cross into spring at odd times, in open fields quite out of sight of the terminus, when the heart leaps at a bluebird's warble, or when the pulses thrill to behold at night the northward-returning water-fowl, —


“As, darkly limned against the crimson sky,
Its figure floats along.”

TRAILING ARBUTUS.



WHEN the gray air breathes chill in early spring,
And coldly fall the cheerless sunset gleams ;
When the sere grasses rustle, whispering
Of life that is, of death that only seems ;
When the wild wind sighs in the weaving wood,
With secret summoning of bud and leaf,
And wails along the bare and withered rood
As in an ecstasy of lonely grief,
Then, springing from decaying fern and sedge, —
First signal of the new-awakening earth, —
On sunny slopes along the forest edge,
Surprising with its loveliness their dearth,
The blessèd arbutus but half conceals
The tender beauty its perfume reveals.

MARCH HOPE.

ARCH is rightly ranked in spring, notwithstanding the grumblers who call it a winter interloper. Let there be as much snow as January boasts, and temperature as nigh to zero as the bitterest February records, — are there not always the climbing sun, the penetrating west-winds, the diminishing drifts, the glimpses between storms of grassy banks, and anon a gay bluebird? And the wonderful arbutus, fresh as first at Plymouth, greets pilgrim quest in the mossy oases of country wood-sides, — perhaps somewhat pale and lonely, but brave for all that, and prophetic of the full-blossomed knolls of April. There is an element in the March air unregistered by any weather-gauge, but as real as if it were statistical, — it is hope! And when the moisture of the seething snow rests, a faint bluish mist, against the hills, and all their inviting outlines are bordered with delicate orange light, the heart leaps in answer, saying: “Ay! here is Spring! Soon may I tread those glorified heights and find the flowers waking, soon feel the immortal pulse of Nature stir and thrill me with the old worship of her sure and bounteous beauty!”

The bright hope of spring is truly present amid all the wind and sleet. If a bushel of March dust is worth a king's ransom, the wild days of the past week might serve to rescue all the dynasties of Europe from their overthrow. The picturesque is not wanting even to so bitter and worrying a storm as a frigid northwester bearing clouds of sand. How they close the vista of the street, with yellow clouds rising far over all the high copings of brick and seeming to aspire to the sky, blotting out for a moment the pretentious works of men, — themselves and their works nothing but incorporations of the dust that hides and blinds them! This is the very moral of what is, if there is nothing beyond. Then as well be one of the bits of senseless mineral lifted on the reckless gale as a sentient creature that suffers and has some strange element of unrest within him that he vainly calls a soul. From the hill-top all the valley fills with a mist of shining dust, and the declining sun glows through it as if every tiny particle were gold and the ordinary earth richer than Eldorado.

WOODCHUCK WISDOM.



THE first sweet odor of the green grass on some sheltered slope, when it steams in the coaxing sunshine, is an encouragement of spring worth more than the eccentricities of a few deluded birds. The pretty songsters have the ethereal grace of hope, but not the gift of weather-wisdom. The stupid woodchuck has the better of them there, as he drags himself out of his winter den, thin as a slab, about fence-mending time. There is an analogy to this in higher circles of the mammalia, if one were curious enough to work it out; but since Æsop's time this sort of study grows less and less common.

By the way, speaking of the woodchuck, he is a creature of steady and alert character, very interesting to the farmers, whose young bean-vines he will nip in summer noons, whose cabbages he will harvest in autumn evenings, and whose clover he will cull with all the discrimination of an epicure. It is even said that he protects his daytime incursions on his favorite crops by posting sentinels, whose sharp note of warning sends each individual chuck by the shortest cut to his burrow; but, as Sir John Maundeville saith of the particularly choice "mervayllis" in his book of

travels, "this I have not seyne." The dogs on the hills begin spring with the diversion of chasing woodchucks; and boys and men drop their hoes, or whatever tools they may have in hand, the moment the crazy yelp is heard that means "I've run him to earth," and hey! over the pasture to be in at the death. The woodchuck does n't always seek his burrow; but crevices of ledges and loose old stone-walls are favorite places of refuge, — I have pulled down a yard or two of wall more than once or twice to deliver Master Chuck to the short mercies of a dog. Woodchucks never climb trees, — that is, hardly ever; for once on a raw spring day, as an interlude to splitting rails and driving stakes, these hands shook a very lean fellow off an apple branch ten feet above the ground, and into the ravening maw of a spotted dog, that speedily shook the wretched life out of him. It is a curious element of savagery in human nature which allows us to take part in these murders of God's wild creatures, who have certainly as much right to eat beans in the leaf as we have to eat them out of the pod. A little shudder of guilt does pass over one at the start; I shall never forget the remorse that woke within me at first hearing the shrill music of the woodchuck's flute-like whistle of despair. It was mere sentiment, — natural and worthy feelings are that.

EASTER.



WINNED with the night in which our Lord
was born, —

The heir of light, the very soul of souls,
Master of joys and comforter of doles, —
Immortally returns the Easter morn !

The chambered rock wherein with tears forlorn
His lovers left him, — lo ! an angel rolls
Away the close-sealed door, — the wishèd goals
Of human hope shine clear, as he in scorn
Flings off the cumbrous swathing of the grave
And stands triumphant in the ruddy sun,
The king and blessing of the waiting earth !
Again, O Christ ! thou strong and swift to save !
Rise thou this morn, renew thy good begun,
And to our souls recall their holy birth !

THE BLUEBIRD.



HE bluebird has come. In respect of this wonderful arrival, presidential inaugurations sink into small importance. The bluebird is president of the year in New England, — a sweet, brave, beautiful, honest creature of God, that comes in upon our earth of frost, and says its fetters are broken, its time has come, and things that are to be green and to blossom may think about it and get ready to do their work. Whatever may have been said about birds before amounts to nothing. Of course there have been blue-jays all winter long, squeaking their frosty call over the spruces, where they filch the sweet seeds, and luxuriate in what they know the poor thing man beneath will never allow to make a tree. They know what trees are worth, though man knows nothing of it, and in his stupid moment sacrifices the product of a century or three centuries as if it were a child's job to replace it. But the blue-jays are not tokens of spring, — they live in the mountains through the winters, hobnobbing with the chickadees and those congruous robins that feel this part of the world their own. It is not until we spy the lovely winged sprite that wears the tinge of spring in the sky and of the brown bare earth, that we can dare the assurance of spring.

A VERNAL HYMN.



THE eager footsteps of Spring are hurrying after decrepit and retreating Winter. All the vernal signs are here, — the bluebird, with his brave brief warble, the admonitory crow, the aged flies that come from mysterious seclusion, the tiny spiders on the corners of the fence ; and out in the woods the woodchuck has some time ago thrust out his inquisitive snout, and then begun the spring sweeping of his comfortable burrow. Even in the city one feels sure of spring as the snow goes ; and we that are elderly stand beside the rivulets that dash down the steep streets, and hear in their babble once more the voices of the country brooks that sang through our youthful days.

I remember how, looking from my mountain home on such a bright March day, — such a wonderful blue sky with swift light clouds beneath the sun, such gray damp masses of cloud east of the sun, such spongy earth beneath the feet, such patches of grimy snow along the roadsides, such dazzling drifts in the pasture hollows, such hurrying gusts tossing the trees, — I have seen across the valley, a mile off as the crow flies, a dark, wooded hill, alive with dashing rills, a few rods


apart, and shining through the breaks in the woods like gleams of living silver amid the shady setting of the forest depths. In such a scene the great life of Nature fills the soul ; the Spirit of God moves upon the face of these waters as upon the seas, and the earth thrills with consciousness of that mighty presence.

The river, swollen from the melting snows, rushes impetuously to its reservoir and replenishment, — lo ! all the rivers seek the sea, and yet is the sea not full, but renders back its volume to the firmament, whence are fed the eternal founts, — the constancy of change, that preserves in infinite variety the endless work of Nature. The meadows are flooded, and one may row his boat beneath the hickories where a few months ago he shared their wild fruit with the chattering squirrels. The muskrat makes his busy voyages on the drifting dead boughs that the gale hurls off the banks ; the mink sits on the rocks, mid-channel, and watches for unwise fish that stray his way, diving for a perch or pickerel with a splendid confidence that makes feeble man ache with envy to think how such a current would swamp him.

There are few birds as yet : the robins are more plenty in the country, and the blue-jay, that all winter long has visited screaming the spruces and pines, picking the seeds from the relaxing cones, screams now more sharply ; the first blackbirds with red wing-tips are seen here and there in the tree-tops along water-courses. The hardier ferns are emerging fresh from their rest. The skunk-cabbage is already in moist

hollows thrusting forth its convoluted leaves, and its coarse flowers are starting, unabashed by any delicate and fragrant bloom as yet ; although at the edges of the woods not far removed the rather arbutus, that budded the fall before, is welcoming the sun to its mossy knolls. On warm borders in the gardens the crocus lifts the mould, almost persuaded into hurried bloom ; and the tricolor violet, happy in its first release from the snow, blossoms without ceremony. In the fields, too, how the green foot-leaves of the golden-rod and the Saint-John's-wort, the buttercup and the ox-eye daisy, reveal their readiness for life ! A difference in the season of bloom is nothing ; the spirit in them all moves to this pious preparation, for they know what the relief of frost, the renewal of sun, means to their kind. The grass now on many a well-kept lawn shows richly green ; the clover is not behind. Walk through the fields and over the hills, wherever one will, he sees Nature ready with her old novelties ; the same that she has ever been, yet not the same, — for there is no era, no year, no day, no hour, that does not in its mood and circumstance hold a vital freshness. The artificial alone wearies and grows stale.

IN PAYMENT.

UST at elbow stands a crooked, spiny, ugly, dark green plant, bearing a magnificent scarlet flower. The flower is composed of several rows of deep, satiny petals, in whose midst depend some twoscore stamens, like threads of scarlet silk tipped with feathery white, around a starry pistil. For this splendid flower, and one more whose bud slowly unfolds in the chill air, this ungainly cactus has been watched and tended for years. There are lives enough that are day by day as ugly and undesirable as the cactus, yet as well nurtured and encouraged ; but it is not often given to one of them to blossom in some great and beauteous deed.

AWAKENING.



H ! for the life of the wild ! —
The stirrings of life in the woods,
The greeting the birds give to spring,
The joy of the heart of the child,
The gayety brisk on the wing,
The flowers astir 'neath their hoods,
The wild wood, the bird, and the child, —
For Nature awaking her broods
To blossom, to breed, and to sing ;
In bliss upon bliss overpiled,
To greet the dear breath of the spring, —
Earth throbbing in happiest moods
Into greenness and melody wild !

APRIL COQUETRY.



HERE is often some courage needed, between blasts of the chill east and the wild northwest, to doff our hats to Spring. One is so dubious as to her identity; we are almost sure that we recognize that grace and sweetness and coy beauty, — and then a gust comes, and it proves only an icicle-hung winter masquerader that we have been smiling at. And when at last we find the gentle creature, she is so shy and elusive, and so abounds in quaint mocking surprises, and yet is so bright, busy and hopeful, and so liberal in promises, — that we are of a mind to say, with the o'er-teased lover, "There is no living with thee, or without thee." Dare we yet speak confidently? Is it — is it not — Spring, whose green robes are brushing the sunny grass and the new wheat, whose voice echoes in the bird-calls, whose "nods and becks and wreathèd smiles" accost us at the edge of the budding wood?

When the sky wears a blue so deep and glowing, it takes more than a snowy flavor in the pure fresh air to allow us to doubt. It is more than "the uncertain glory of an April day;" it is the new year that Nature always begins about now. The dullest of city streets,

mere brick and mortar, have their own way of observing the season ; they have out the watering-carts, laying the dust ; signs of spring overcoats, perçales, light shades of ribbon, new styles of bonnets and clearing-out sales fringe their sides ; the hand-organs multiply, and other indications as remote from Nature. Spring has little to do with such things and places ; nor is she, even in lawns and gardens, half so charming as in the free intimacy of the country. Her virtues and beauties, like those of many a lovely and rare soul, lose something of their interest in society.

Out among our neighboring hills, however, they are not on so comfortable terms with the season as we are. The drift-streaks yet lie alongside the walls and in the hollows, and "the going is pretty bad." The sugar maples drip their sweet juices through the sumach spouts. The farmer is mending gaps in stone walls and driving new stakes at the fence corners ; but the cows know nothing about that, and as they munch their hay or roam the short-cropped meadows for exercise, low discontentedly. Affairs are experimental and tentative ; Nature not having finished her awakening yawns, though the sun be high.

But here the fingers of Spring have loosed the springs that held the elm flowers and the soft-maple's ruddy bloom, and a few warm days will coax them out to the air. Down the street vistas the dull gray tints of the winter trees have warmed through lavender to purple. The willows are shaking their catkins ; the upturned earth smells fresh and healthy ; the narcissus and

tulip, the crocus and snowdrop, are bravely along. On the outlying knolls of the woods the arbutus swells out of its pale spirals into delicate bloom ; and the rue anemone and hepatica are preluding the trillium, the dielytra, and the blue violet. Every day-dawn is heralded by the matins of blackbird and robin, and their aerial fellows, whose cheer and heart rebuke our sluggish spirits with the true aspirant elixir of the spring.


MAPLE SAP.



LET us tap a maple tree in the tingling, sunny early April on the wild hills. The noble vegetable gives of its life these limpid, nectareous drops, dying a day for each drop, and yet bravely swelling its sweet leaf-buds and preparing its light blossoms as if it were not doing double task. Does not Nature speak in each lucent drop? — “Here, O latest son of mine, are the pure fountain-sparkles and essence-rills of my heart. When you touch these arteries you drain my mother-heart, and get the love and life of me in a slow, luscious surrender. This is not a mere distilment of water from aged mould and triturated granite, but the music of my birds and water-falls, the poetry of my still nights and my holy moons, the brooding outcome of my winter rest and the prophecy of my summer wealth. You have all this in the trickle of sap in your hemlock troughs through your sumach spouts; and then, O man, you do with it as with all your blessings, — vulgarize it in your rough black pots and pans, — and it is one of my miracles that even then you cannot boil and drain out of it all the wildness and the magic, but there is a trace of them left in the common cake of sugar that you preserve. Remember

me, then ; for I am in all your breath and being likewise, though your whole work may be to obscure and violate my pure and holy impress, and grow vacant of my inspiration, year by year, until you die, not so blessed and blessing by far as this sturdy tree."

FLOWER OF PEACE.

T is on shrubby knolls out of the woods, or if in them, in sunny openings, with special fellowship for pine and laurel, that the trailing arbutus is found. This paragon of blossoms creates a sympathy between the widest apart of men and women who live within its gracious influence. It is a high and gracious humanizer; and if there were arbutus enough in the world, one might even keep men in eternal peace, — for who could war with a brother that wore, like himself, a pledge of community so exquisite?

NATURE HOLDS LEVEE.



NOT even in the sensuous flush of June are the country ways more enticing. There is a universal sense of escape and liberty ; and one greets the little bluets in the meadow with, “ Ha, little prisoner, and have you got out again ? ” and when the next step he spies a dandelion, — “ Bless your honest golden face, — it’s nearer summer than winter, sure enough ! ” In the forest what a light, open welcome the trees offer to the inquisitive sun, and return him the resinous incense of the firs, and the clean woodland scent that is like the breath of mother Earth herself. Here have the old things been put away, and all is becoming new. There is no prudish privacy in the robing of Nature, yet how secret and undiscernible it is ! We are welcome to her levee ; but though we stay never so closely and lovingly, we catch no glimpse of the doffing or donning. Nature admits to the intimacy of her very bosom those whom she loves, but scarcely may one in thousands of her lovers know her veiled and reticent beauty.

BRAVE ROBIN !



IT is a coy spring which dallies on her way hither, being plainly loath to appear in company with all this bluster of northerly wind. The birds are not to be cheated out of their song, notwithstanding the chill reception they get, and every passable opportunity they seize for rehearsing their June concert. There is no daunting the robin, whose intrepid front is set against the wind with a cheerful independence that warms the heart toward him. He is as comfortable a friend now as the chickadee is in the winter snows, —

“Here was this atom in full breath
Hurling defiance at vast death ;
This scrap of valor just for play
Fronts the north wind in waistcoat gray.”

The bluebird, or even the song sparrow with his sweet and intimate confidences, is not so reassuring. “Ho !” says Redbreast, “do you think I would leave my winter quarters for out-o'-doors unless the time had come? What’s a day or two more of ice in the air? Is n’t the sun degrees higher every day? Sing the mercury down the wind, as I do !” And then he pipes forth valorously, and the meadow greens visibly as we listen.

Now that the robin's song is so cheering a part of the morning hours, and his faithful good-night so comfortable in the twilight, we have a closer interest in him than we shall have by and by, when there are more warblers, — when the bobolink, the "brown thrasher," the orchard oriole, and the catbird are rivalling the robin, and many an ungrateful hearer will say they are surpassing him. But I am not of this number; holding, with a rare lover of birds, that "Remove the robin from the woodland orchestra, and it would be left without a soprano." (It should be "chorus" instead of "orchestra," but let the fine enthusiasm excuse the verbal inaccuracy.) This partial supplanting of our robin by other singers reminds me of something said of the English robin by Gilbert White of Selborne, that best lover and knower of birds and all the "small deer" of fields and woods. Redbreasts, he observes, are called autumn songsters because in spring and summer "their voices are lost and drowned in the general chorus; in the autumn their song becomes distinguishable." But the English robin's song, as this intimates, is light, comparing with that of our robin about as his size does, — for every one knows that the two birds have no marked resemblance excepting that each has a red breast, and the reds are not the same tint either. It was a considerable grief to my childish heart to find that ours was not the historic redbreast that covered with leaves the Babes in the Wood.

THE EAGLE'S FALL.



HE eagle, did ye see him fall? —
Aflight beyond mid-air
Erewhile his mighty pinions bore him,
His eyry left, the sun before him ;
And not a bird could dare
To match with that tremendous motion,
Through fire and flood, 'twixt sky and ocean, —
But did ye see the eagle fall?

And so ye saw the eagle fall !
Struck in his flight of pride
He hung in air one lightning moment,
As wondering what the deadly blow meant,
And what his blood's ebb tide.
Whirling off sailed a loosened feather ;
Then headlong, pride and flight together, —
'T was thus ye saw the eagle fall !

Thus did ye see the eagle fall !
But on the sedgy plain,
Where closed the monarch's eye in dying,
Marked ye the screaming and the vying
Wherewith the feathered train,
Sparrow and jackdaw, hawk and vulture,
Gathered exulting to insult your
Great eagle in his fall?

ELECTIVE AFFINITIES.

"The bubbling brook doth leap when I come by,
Because my feet find measure with its call ;
The birds know when the friend they love is nigh,
For I am known to them, both great and small.
The flower that on the lonely hill-side grows
Expects me there when spring its bloom has given ;
And many a tree and bush my wanderings knows,
And e'en the clouds and silent stars of heaven."



ONES VERY may have had these experiences, but not so has every one who loves Earth and delights in her beauties ; it is more than he can carry unspoiled in fine significance through busy days among men and bricks. Well though he should woo the birds, they would know him for a stranger ; and he, remembering perchance a time when it was not so, would feel the pang that comes of knowing that Nature and he are friends, but no more lovers. Do you remember Donatello's agony at Monte Beni over the desertion of his feathered and furry friends ? They knew it, — knew how the pure boy's heart had gone out of him, — there was something hollow in his sweet wildwood murmur that used to call them and hold them. The silent rebuke of Nature's strangeness cuts to the quick. There is but one thing that hurts worse, — the reproof of a child.

But if the birds and squirrels do discriminate so finely in character as it seemed to their kin, the Faun of Hawthorne, they go deeper than our sight. I remember a certain frequent companion when I was a boy of thirteen or fourteen years, whom no one, however indifferent to the Sunday-school standard, could have stretched charity to call a good boy. Yet there were times when he would lay aside his impish tricks, call for me, nothing loath, to go into the woods, and for an afternoon be a nearly perfect companion. He seldom talked; and when he did, it was to notice some wild denizen of the shades and tell of its habits. The woods had never before been so full of life; I saw the little creatures with his eyes. Sometimes he would throw himself upon the mould in a nook where the sunlight trickled through the leaves, and with satiny strips of the white birch bark between his teeth utter a curious wild ululation like the blending of many forest cries; and it was strange to hear the sudden chatter of the red squirrel, the richer-toned, slower answer of the gray squirrel, and perhaps the chipmunk's sharp zip, respond to it. It was plain enough that his call had a meaning to those free citizens of the greenwood. When Hawthorne's wonderful romance came out, not so long after, it reminded me of this exceptional trait of my not otherwise congenial companion. He had a strange familiarity with snakes, too, and used to scare the timid children half out of their wits by suddenly liberating among them a hissing green or striped serpent; harmless, to be sure, but not at all a comfort-

able thing for a boy to pull out of his bosom, next his skin, as this boy did. I believe it was the snakes that he really had affinity with. Perhaps it is because I feel that it ought to be so ; but it now seems to me that the answers of the birds and squirrels to his call were not friendly, but angry and resentful.

THE CAGED BOBOLINK.



BIRD swung in the gilded ring
That hung within the gaudy cage ;
It was a morning of the spring
That filled his breast with noble rage.
Needs must I pause to hear him sing,
He warbled out so loud and clear,
Yet with a pain the notes did ring ;
And this the song I seemed to hear : —

This is my song of the clover-top
Over a meadow of daisies,
A meadow of daisies and clover, —
Song to make veriest rover stop,
Stay while I sing it all over, —
Whether bee in his honey-hunt mazes,
Or maiden that looks for her lover,
Or lover a-thridding the daisies, —
To listen my song on the clover-top !

What? not a smile, —
When such a carol
Yet this long while
There will not dare all

My southern kin
Come north and sing you
Out-doors, as I in?
Well, what will bring you?

Hear my song of the gay dandelion !
Bright eye of gold in the meadow,
Meadow so green and so golden ;
I the sweet June dew drink, and I lie on
The grass sweet with dew, and all golden
With blossoms in sun or in shadow, —
So fast in the charm am I holden,
The charm of the gold and green meadow, —
Of the breast of the bright dandelion !

Still grave as owl?
Is it this wire,
This perch for fowl,
This seed-dish nigher, —
These make you grave?
Ah, it is truth, friend !
I 'm but a slave, —
Thanks for your ruth, friend !

Yet must I sing of the summer field, —
Summer and sunny fair flowers,
Flowers that laugh into fragrance !
Song to make each eager comer yield,
Pause in his haste or his vagrance,

List till I sing of June hours,
Breathe as he lists the pure fragrance,
The health of the grass and the flowers
That bloom in my song of the summer field.

I sing, for I was born to sing ;
I sing, and scorn each painted bar,—
I scorn them with my prisoned wing,
I sing, and send my life afar,
Out of the street that 's listening,
To meadows where my fellows are ;
I sing, and sing, and ever sing,
Until my heart-strings break their bar !

SALVE ! REVERENTIA.

And 't is and ever was my wish and way
To let all flowers live freely, and all die,
Whene'er their Genius bids their souls depart,
Among their kindred in their native place.
I never pluck the rose ; the violet's head
Hath shaken with my breath upon its bank
And not reproached me ; the ever sacred cup
Of the pure lily hath between my hands
Felt safe, unsoiled, nor lost one grain of gold.

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.




THESE pellucid lines express a phase of sensitive sympathy with life which can only be experienced by a few among the few. It is not so much an evidence of delicater refinement of nature as it is of a peculiar tendency of that refinement. It is quite possible that he may have this feeling of the sanctity of flower and herb who yet would fall beneath the ban Cowper pronounced on him "who needlessly sets foot upon a worm." Uncle Toby, who sweetly bade the fly go free because "there is room enough for me and thee," or Johnny Appleseed, the orchard-planter, who would not kill a mosquito, would neither of them understand Landor's curious scruple. Their tenderness was, if not strictly humanity, then say humaneness. Wordsworth had the sense of both this and the other ; yet he never approached, as

we remember, this one thought of Landor. For the base of it is a feeling compounded out of that reverence and love for the manifold mute life of the earth, and a perception of its ineffable charms and marvels and meanings, such as no affiliation with mankind or kindness toward the lower order of the animal creation can remotely rival in the ethereal quality of its delight. We pluck our flowers in wild or garden, and place bouquets on our tables and nosegays at our breasts ; but if this rarer capacity has ever stirred us, it must be with inner protest and mourning.

This is only saying that convention, the inevitable averaging of our practice and our way of looking at things, buries the natural instinct. We do not feel sacrilege in profaning the fine fragrance of a rose with the odors of roast and boiled, but that is what we have committed, in the poet's thought. Nor shall it be allowed in refutation to quote poets' praises of wine beneath the roses or the eglantines. Wine, the gracious essence of the grape, is akin to all the bloom and leaf and fruitage of the earth, and mingles its breath with theirs in native fellowship.

TO EACH ITS OWN LIFE.

N one of those blossoming nooks which adorn sequestered woods in late spring, where anemones, bloodroots, the adder-tongue, the yellow violet, trilliums, dielytras, — whatever flowers favor the spot, — do abound, I have known it seem wanton rapine and slaughter to invade and cull the beautiful sisterhoods ; and as if the foot which must tread upon them if it entered there would bear thence a stain of inexpressible guilt. An emotion as sudden as the sight has made me leave unrefit on its knoll, in its sunny nest of moss amid the melting snow, the opening buds of the brave arbutus. And coming upon the snowy splendid orchis, alone in the dark shades of the August woods, I have felt as if intruding upon the privacy of a queen, and retreated with the obeisance due to royalty. In such ways and moments have flowers yet the power of impressing our dull sense with the feeling that their own life is sweet, and their fate far more desirable to meet where Nature placed them than at our violent hands. Tom Moore's sentimental skit,

“I'll not leave thee, thou lone one,
To pine on the stem,”

is arrant nonsense ; but how could a poet of society be expected to know anything about the secret soul of a flower ?

From such trains of thought, such comparisons of feeling as this, grow up the Greek conceptions of spirits of the trees and flowers ; the stories of transformation — Daphne into the laurel, Hyacinthus and Narcissus into the flowers which still bear their names, and many others — were a part of the development of poetic fancy into legend and religion. The fairies were another embodiment of native instincts in later ages and by races of widely different genius ; so that while the Greek spirit of beauty clad the geniuses of the life of earth in forms of grace and gave them voices of melody, the northern nations made the tenants of the glades and fields ugly and vicious in shape and temper, and it took the refining influences of ages and the mingling of the classic superstitions to give us Shakspeare's lovely fairies — which he has after his imperial fashion transported in a *Midsummer Night's Dream* to Athens, where they had never been before. But in a dream not only might Oberon and Titania range Attica, but Athens herself become something new and strange.


FORBEARANCE.



HE questions of Emerson in his "Forbearance," which have echoed in the memory since those lines from the "Faesulan Idyl" were read, have but a partial connection with the peculiar luxuriousness of Landor's sentiment. They go deeper, touching the mastery and the symmetry of the inner life, when there is no self-denial, only because self asks for nothing. This will be realized as one goes on to read the other questions joined with them, and the adjuration the poet appends : —

"Hast thou named all the birds without a gun?
Loved the wood rose and left it on its stalk?
At rich men's tables eaten bread and pulse?
Unarmed, faced danger with a heart of trust?
And loved so well a high behavior
In man or maid, that thou from speech refrained,
Nobility more nobly to repay?
Oh be my friend, and teach me to be thine!"

NATURE AND MAN.

E are used to regard Nature as apart from man and for his service; the earth and all its products, the living creatures upon it, and all the mysterious forces of the elements around it, as existing and operating with sole reference to him as the crown of creation. Once indeed all people believed that the sun and the other heavenly bodies were solely man's tributaries, and received with unquestioning literalness the statement that God set them in the firmament to give light upon the earth. The times of that simplicity are gone; there are few now who do not, if only in the most superficial way, know how minute a particle the world is in the universe, how little that universe amid the myriads in space, and how infinitely small to all these shining globes is their casual office of lighting ours. We could not now imagine a general extending his arm to hold sun and moon still for the completion of a victory, or credit the creation of a star to signalize the birth of a benefactor. We have even lost many things that were once believed about the phenomena of our own earth and atmosphere, as well as the strange invasions of skyey visitants; to us the aurora borealis no longer

presages war, nor meteors denote the death of princes, nor eclipses admonish nations of ruin, nor comets forerun pestilence.

Yet there lingers the faith that the more usual and ordinary processes of Nature are somewhat less unmanageable. There are pious souls that think a strenuous petition might be answered with rain, or that it might insure fair weather on the ocean, or secure an abundant harvest. It would be curious to know of how many ministers the story has been told of the fervent prayer on a hot Sunday during a period of drouth, and the answer ere the meeting ended with a shower so copious and prolonged that the people could not for hours leave the church. It was told of old Parson Pomeroy on Chester Hill half a century ago ; in a book on answers to prayer a more distinguished minister figures in the rôle. When one considers the laws that govern the gathering and discharging of moisture, as science has discovered them to us, it is seen to be impossible that such showers could have been influenced by the coincident prayer, or that the lack of showers in thousands of similar cases of drouth and desire could be construed as the denial of prayer.

Man truly has his part in compelling and locally changing those very laws of moisture. His use of the earth's surface, his destruction or conservation of forests, his cultivation or neglect, his habitancy or migration,—all are factors that have turned and are turning arid regions fertile and vast tracts desert,—that increase or decrease the rainfall, divert the air-

currents, and soften or make rigorous the seasons. Yet this man does unknowingly ; and when the keener intellects have observed, compared, and reasoned out his ignorant achievement, not all they say, nor even his interests and ambitions, can induce him to control the work intelligently. We speak of the blind forces of Nature ; but one of the blindest of these forces is man. The wide economy by which the worlds are ordered includes his work also, and all of him that concerns earth falls within the inexorable scheme of it. If in some aspects he seems greater than his fate, let us reflect how insufficiently we can take his proportions. "A fixed star," says Young, "is as much within the bounds of Nature as a flower of the field, though less obvious, and of far greater dignity."

Nor is Nature slow to assert her right over us. Not only in her elemental rages does she use man and his labors as toys. The still progress of years betrays her kindlier embraces. The strong relics of prosperity that races leave behind them are straightway adopted into her possessions. Around the monstrous bases of the pyramids she sweeps the desert sands, and dignifies their uncouth bulk with desolation. An old castle crumbles to ruins, and vines enfold and mask it in beauty, trees root in its moats and on its barbicans, and it becomes one with the mountain-side. A field that man has strewn with murder and the enginery of war, but waves the greener with grass and smiles the brighter with flowers thereafter. We die ; and in her wonderful laboratory our bodies change to unknown

forces, resolving into new forms to keep the endless course of re-creation. Here, where the busy feet of men tread about their several callings, see how Nature reveals her powerful presence. We leave her here and there in careful order a tree ; but in the garden, or in the little basement area, or at the street-side against a wall, what are these paired leaflets looking so bravely and confidently forth in opening summer? Ah, the sugar maple has sowed a winged seed here ; and there an elm, or a locust, or an ailanthus has begun life. Here in the sidewalk, between two bricks, the grass thrusts upward its brisk spears, and even in crowded city streets its rural presence greets us. Were some catastrophe to empty this bustling city in a day of all its people forever, this work of Nature would go swiftly and continuously on, until all would be absorbed into her generous embrace, and the place become as traditionary as the Indian towns that preceded it, or perhaps as forgotten as the abodes and defences of the prehistoric mound-builders, over which the Western farmer plows, uncaring of their past.

FOR RONALD IN HIS GRAVE.



H are the heavens clear, ye say?
Oh is the air still sweet?
Oh is there joy yet in the day,
And life yet in the street?

I thought the sky in tears would break,
I thought the winds would rave,
I thought that every heart would ache
For Ronald in his grave.

Oh Nature has a cruel heart
To smile when mine's so sore!
Oh deeper stings the cruel smart
Than e'en it did before!


How can the merry earth go dance,
And all the banners wave,
The children shout, the horses prance, —
And Ronald in his grave?

A MEMORIAL ROSE.




NCE, sauntering along a country road, I happened upon a little square of brighter grass, speaking of more generous husbandry than the surrounding pasture. There was no fence, except beside the road. There were lilac bushes by the solitary rail-topped wall; but within there appeared no trace of dwelling or garden, or other sign of human occupancy. As a saunterer always must do when his eye is caught, I turned aside into this peculiar spot. There was no mystery about it. Several open, oblong pits explained the greenness, the lilacs, the desertion. There had been human occupancy, — these were graves. No unsightly gravel or sand disfigured the earth; it was all green, — the mounds beside the pits, and those hollows themselves. In one of them flourished richly a bush bearing a crimson rose, as if it were the translation of an ardent heart. The ashy tenant of that narrow house had long since been removed with superstitious hands to lie with kindred in some remoter spot; but here he had left this memorial bloom. What ground could hold life better than this? Plucking one of these buds was like laying hands upon a throbbing pulse. With every summer they prefigure the resurrection.

AB IMIS AD SUMMOS.

ENEATH the stars, in "the very dead and hollow of the night," when the wide country sleeps, — no light from any home of man intruding on the vague distances of view, — and when the hush of earth is most profound and solitary, a deep seriousness inevitably fills the heart. The lightest nature that thinks at all must have felt this check upon the common temper with which he looks on life. But this, instead of weighing down the spirits, may rather raise them to the farthest pitch of exaltation. That vast expanse of universe beyond universe, covering incalculable space and reaching into the inexorable void, hanging above and stretching below and encircling with such tremendous immensity this small speck, oppresses our narrow sense and crushes man into insignificance. But from the depth of this abasement the soul leaps up to its high stature, it lays hold on immortality. All the awful secrets of those worlds are its inheritance, for by its very apprehension of their dread vastness it knows itself akin to their Maker.

IMMANUEL.

PSALM CXXXIX.

 HERE shall I go from Thee? —
God's wondering poet cried, —
Or where shall I abide
To escape Thine eye?
In heaven's height Thou sure dost dwell,
And Thou inhabitest deep hell.

If I on wings of morn
To farthest seas should flee,
There still Thou ledest me;
And if I fly
Into thick darkness of the night,
Behold! Thou shinest, and 't is light!

In unimagined space
Beyond the outmost world,
Where formless vapors whirled
Invade the void,
Thy Spirit broods the awful will
Which myriad ages shall fulfil.

And in my narrow heart
With blinding passion dense,
Thou, infinite, intense,
Art yet employed
To feed and nurse that holy spark
Thou gavest me from out Thy dark.

Yea, whether near or far,
Well do I know Thou art,
And hast in me a part
As of a star ;
For Thou dost light my inner sky,
And Heaven 's no nearer Thee than I.

SUMMER DROPS IN FOR A CALL.



THE spring advances in that half-charming, half-vexing way we are used to in New England, and would not exchange for the most equable weather known elsewhere under the sun. One day the air is sweet and tender, the birds wake us with happy warbles from the maples and elms, and the familiar robin hops over the garden with a delightful air of being at home ; while the tiny spiders appear on the sunny side of the fence, and an early mole marks a pioneer course across the under side of the yard. I go out into the fields, and sniff the moist exhalation from the mossy bank where presently I shall find the first anemone and the light bell of the wild oat. The lingering snow under the pines has crystallized into a concretion of homœopathic ice-pellets, very cold and comfortable on the tongue. The sun is warm, though there is a chill in the shade. We cross the sunny, springy spot where the children made the acquaintance of an interesting striped snake, last summer, and thinking of the snow bank I abstractedly answer the children's inquiries by saying, "It's too early for snakes" — when, lo ! I fairly jump as parallel streaks of green and greenish white define

themselves in elegant curves beneath my very feet. How he writhes, with my foot on his tail, and darts out his red-forked tongue, in harmless parody of his kindred who can do mischief. But it really is too early for snakes, as the next day proves with its icy north-wind and stiffening earth, when it fairly seems as if Winter were back again, chastising us for the pleasure we felt at his departure on his regular foreign tour.

Once in a while, in these capricious coquetries of Spring, we get a visitation of genuine Summer. Such a day as Palm Sunday convicts even prosaic people of imagination ; for how can one help personifying the spirit of that gracious, wooing, winning warmth as Summer herself, an ineffably sweet, fresh, glowing, and blooming woman, sumptuous and royal in beauty, conscious queen and idol of the earth and men, borne triumphantly on "viewless coursers of the air" to survey the realm that shortly will be hers, to call the grass and flowers forth to greet her coming, and to cheer the hearts of winter-worn humanity ! In that mysterious and luxurious haze that wraps the woodlands, the thin silver streaks down shaded pastures, where the fences or water-courses retain a remnant of snow, vanish almost as one gazes ; and the gleam of the meeting-house on a hill twenty miles off, with the dark pine grove opposite, reveals the pervasion of the same sunny charm in the hill country, where, a little while later, we shall be looking for the ideal reign of Summer.

Now the wild-flowers are budding swiftly, and yesterday the ruddy fringes strayed out of the flower-buds of the soft maple. The smell of burning brush-heaps comes not unpleasantly to our nostrils ; and our ears catch the impatient short lows of the cows as they look from the farmyards to the new green in moist spots in the pastures. Some of the birds are mating, and one may see prompt robins making up to each other in the most affectionate way under the apple trees. The crow-blackbirds are noisy with their busy opinions ; and when they pause in their consideration of affairs, they have a vesper besides that is not so bad. The crows fly heavily over the land, cawing in conscious wisdom. Even in the marshes pipes the early frog ; and the tree-toad has begun his querulous trill, like a note of desolation amid the general welcome of the awakening earth. The season invites to those feelings that are most cordial and content with the scheme of life, — at no other time is it so natural to accept the state of things as now, — for revival, renewal, aspiration, inspiration, faith, are in every process of Nature. The like leap, by a thought, into the life of human hearts, and suddenly they are newly born to high purpose and endeavor.

“THE SOOTE SEASON.”



THE year now enters upon the one season which every soul and body loves, — the charmed transition by way of fairy-land from harsh winds and northern storms to the passionate and luxurious fervor of summer. This is the true and only spring of the poets and lovers ; for when any one praises the sweetness of spring, it is not what the calendar so calls that is meant. When a few days ago there came a day of southwest zephyrs and soft light, and the maples first began really to unfold their pushing buds, ready and waiting a long time for just that magic secret sign of Nature's, and the elms began to cast shadows, so that before night the streets had grown closer and the nearer hills showed that ineffable tender green that is rather a dream of foliage than its reality, — then your neighbor met you with a smile and said, “Well, this is something like spring !” He was mistaken, — it was “something like” summer. The truth is, the most of people do not love spring at all ; what they love is summer.

Spring is all that we have had since February, — the broken old Winter driven out inch by inch, leaf by leaf, flower by flower ; fighting every step, most loath to go, most jealous of dethronement. The frosty nights,

the cutting winds, the cold gray days, the hiding sun, —these are all the circumstance of our Spring, which nevertheless conquers every now and then a day so lovely that it is memorable even when June herself, rich in her exquisite bloom and fragrance, has taken possession of a beautiful earth, made ready for her queenly occupancy by her forbidding, capricious, magical and self-obliterating forerunner, Spring. Only those love Spring who look beneath the outer demeanor at the true, sweet heart of the wonder-worker that has been so assiduously, and under such misinterpretation, busied in creating the beauty we now see and hear and breathe and feel in every sense. Most unreasonably the world insists on asking from Spring what she cannot give until she bids us farewell. It is like — to compare the original to the imitation — following an artist through the processes of his picture ; the filling the canvas with paint, the back-color that tells nothing, the first rude suggestion of the composition, the masses indicated, and so on ; and at every stage abusing the artist because we do not see beauty and sweet perfectness. When Spring goes, she leaves the finished picture, — that is June. Is not this in truth the very time that might well have been meant by Surrey? —

"The soote season, that bud and bloom forth brings,
With green hath clad the hill, and eke the vale ; —
Summer is come, for every spray now springs ;
The busy bee her honey now she mings ;
Winter is worn, that was the flower's bale."

It is natural for man thus to rate the blessings of his lot. All through life he is drawing on the future, and depreciating the present that is making his future. Perhaps we all have our Junes, our brief periods when we are in accord with the work of time and would not wish it otherwise. But for the rest we are apt to be at odds with life as we are with spring weather. There is the difference that we have a hand in life and none in the weather, but there is very little difference in the spirit with which we treat the operations of Nature and of humanity. Why should not the course of the years in our affairs and Nature's be received with constant gratitude and gladness, seeing that both are parts of God's great order of creation and progression,—both firm of purpose and full of promise? Why should a dreary March storm so discomfit immortal beings, as if we had less wit than the little piping frogs, whose shrill, sweet note penetrates the chill of the east wind with such assurance of better days? But if the March storm may be borne with hope and cheer by these humble chirrupers, and even be greeted by the blue-bird and the robin, brave in their honest hearts because they know that as the summer has come in past years it is surely on the way, notwithstanding the clouds and cold,—how much more may the work and worry of our lives be borne, seeing that we have the encouragement of a sure recompense and reward, contingent only upon "patient continuance in well-doing," such as the New England spring affords for our example?

A LOVE SONG.



Oh lightly slipt the amber day
Between the cloven hills,
And died in one long purple ray
From forest, fields, and rills !

Oh softly crept the summer dusk
Adown the western wood,
And wrapt the mead and bordering busk
Within its hiding hood !

Oh slowly dipt the vesper star
Behind the mountain's rim,
And fireflies over marsh and scar
Flashed out their tiny glim !

Oh fondly claspt, my tender dove,
Within these faithful arms !
Oh rest thou here, thou only love, —
Oh rest from all alarms !



II.

FULNESS OF JOY

ON HILL AND SHORE.



II.

THE JOY OF JUNE.

THE spring prelude of delusive days, of coy breathings and sweet encouragements, one morn, which the next ruthlessly dispels with a northern breeze or drowns in an easterly rain, has modulated with charming arpeggios into the full-passioned harmony of summer. The air's warm suggestions became suddenly assurances. All at once one saw that the maples were thickly green and the birds rollicking in their leafy hospitality ; that the children were knee-high in the grass and the clover budding ; espied the oriole flashing, an embodied flame, beneath the orchard's bowery bloom ; and felt that the fragrance of lilac and apple blossoms, the warmer blue of the sky, the light whispers of the south wind, were not the dower of Spring. It is the way of Nature in our climate ; after all the chill and storm and discomfort she crowds into the months of preparation, one day she finds the time ripe and the earth ready,

and flashes upon us with magic swiftness the shining ardor of summer.

There is a curious similitude between these untamable, unknowable operations of Nature and our own human habits, — so we delay, dream, and disappoint ; so too we hurry to achieve and supply the lack of earlier endeavor : but, after all, the likeness is not close enough to examine critically ; in results we must allow that Nature has the better of us ; it is more purely satisfying to see a tree grow into its green glory than to observe most of our work.

June, passion-month of the ardent season, mistress of the suffrages of poets, is now at our beck and call ; the earth's heart is warm with life, and Nature revels in the temperate luxury that our northern clime permits. The lovely miracle of verdure is now complete ; as freshly marvellous to any thought above the commonplace as though it were an original creation. Always the same habitude with the dry twigs and the unforgetting roots ; the maple leaves opposite, the oak alternate ; the pine needles in circling tufts, the hemlock featherwise ; the grape with winding tendrils, the woodbine with clinging feet, — the wonder of this resuming life never ceases. How should it be that we can count on these processes, knowing of a certainty that the earth will bring forth grass, and the herb yielding seed, and the tree yielding fruit, each after his kind, even as when the evening and the morning were the third day ?

We are impatient and plaintive over our routine ;

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

AND HIS WIFE.

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[OVER.]

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[OVER.]

to know that on the morrow we shall have to repeat the order of yesterday, — the tedious round of columns of figures, petty articles of trade, vulgar details of housewifery, oversight of others' labors, the burden of civilly meeting indifferent people, the wearying inconsequence of those things that kill the precious, irrecoverable hours ; — but there is no discontent in the work of Nature, despite its endless repetition. Our dissatisfied spirits may well pray, with one of the noblest and most human of poets, to be granted —

“ But so much patience as a blade of grass
Grows by, contented through the heat and cold.”

The forest shades now afford delicious comfort. Far off the vague dusk of their borders invites, drawing the saunterer from the fervent field or dusty path. What charm of rest or renewal dwells not in those woodland secrecies? Within them abides a serene gravity of welcome. The earth itself is changed, a step beneath the shadow of the outer boughs ; the grasses have a lighter hue and body, and the meadow plants that spring there don a timid delicateness quite unlike their outer bravery. Beyond these approaches the leafy recesses beckon the visitor on, over the mould, piled soft with generations of fallen foliage, quiet to the loitering foot, and where even the crackle of trodden twigs contributes to the native harmony of the place, — to the sweet gayety of bird-song in the high tree-tops, the wild chatter of the squirrels and their scamperings, the colloquies of the wind-stirred leaves. Deep in the

far retreats, where scarce a ray of sunlight sifts through the green roof, some gray rock, cushioned with mosses and spicy evergreen, offers a couch that luxury need not disdain nor philosophy refuse. The tranquil heart of Earth beats here ; and abandoning all that is alien to the sacred place, her child may for a passing hour share its calm pulsations, and be still.

OLD LOVERS.



HE summer twilight through the shades
Of kingly maples slowly fades,
Where in the cottage doorway sit
Two lovers, changing love and wit ;
And in each other's eyes
With long, fond looks of sweet content
They gaze, as if each heart so went
In sympathetic pulse, 't would break
Were not the other there, to take
Its secret and its prize.


Gray is his venerable head ;
And o'er his wrinkled cheek have fled
The hopeful hours of gracious youth,
The years of manhood's strife and ruth,
The lingering months of age.
Gray are her reverend hairs, and thin ;
And over brow and lip and chin
Time's stern threescore and ten have writ
The unmistakable lines that fit
The earthly pilgrimage.

And yet they love : hand clasped in hand,
They sit and look out on the land,
And breathe the incense of their morn
As theirs were passion newly born.

Her eyes of gentian-blue
Inquire of his in perfect faith ;
And his of hazel, free from scathe
Of memories that wander wild,
Smile back at her, like child to child,
A love that 's tried and true.

Now both the quavering voices lift
Aloft to God their vesper shrift ;
The notes of sturdy " Mear " arise,
And " Bangor " floats up to the skies,
Or " China's " wailing cry.
What matter if the tunes are sad ?
They know that all their heart is glad ;
They know their Father hears above
The feeble sound the key-note, Love,
That lifts their souls on high !

NATURE'S INFINITE LEISURE.

HE leisure of Nature is a quality rather parodied than shared by man. Most of human-kind have too much work to do to know what leisure is, and the poor never come nigh it. If it happens that laboring people are out of work, their waiting has no element of leisure in it. To be at leisure is to have no care, no anxiety, no apprehension, not even anticipation. That is man's leisure ; and it is not attained in a vacation for a summer fortnight, for one can nowise get out of sight of work when the grind must re-begin so soon. But Nature does not cease work to be at leisure ; for leisure is her common habit, carried through all her great peaceful processes, and which violent interruptions only serve to emphasize. See the leaves fill with the blind impulse of spring, the fern uncurl, the rose expand a tiny bud to glorious sweet bloom, the corn rise from the ground, "first the blade, then the ear, afterward the full corn in the ear," — all with such infinite moderation and constant patience. If it were given me to make a rose, say, I should do a thousand other things until the time came when I wanted a rose, and then I should make it at once, — a rose, complete. Hurry, always, — never leisure.

“WOODMAN, SPARE THAT TREE!”



IT is but a few days ago that I came upon a dethroned monarch. He was lying by the roadside, murdered, foully assassinated; and the villains who had done the deed had added the indignity of mutilation. His noble trunk was truncated, his head was off, his limbs lopped, and all his glorious robes were gone. There were several looking at the tragic spectacle; but none wept, although this monarch had been no tyrant, but all his life a benefactor. He had reigned, I do not know how long, but longer than most dynasties or than any single sovereign since the flood. He had seen our Revolution, which warned off rulers by heredity, but had no terrors for him. He was one of hundreds, a kingly brotherhood that adorn our streets, any one of them liable to share his fate when a man feels that his house-roof rots more rapidly under the spread of its branches, or when a sidewalk wants straightening and it stands six inches inside the line, or when a block is put up and a pin-maker on the fourth floor complains of the bad light. There is no respect for the life of a tree; yet a great maple or elm or oak is worth scores of

some human lives, and often if we had to decide whether the petitioner or the tree should be cut down, we should vote to sacrifice the petitioner as far the less useful.

I think the years of my pilgrimage from boyhood might almost be reckoned by the trees whose death I have mourned. One was a great white pine that stood beside a pasture in a Hampshire village. It shone in the sun over the hot sandy road, and the ceaseless sough of its branches made the summer day delicious ; it was seen far off, a landmark and a point of rendezvous for the children. It was cut down for cord-wood, — the branches grew low, so there was no timber, — and all that glory sold for three dollars or so a cord. Not far from the pine, in a rich meadow lot, rose an immense chestnut. It had spread its great branches in welcome isolation until it stretched near seventy feet diameter ; it must have girthed between twenty and twenty-five feet at a man's height ; and was, in blossom or in full fruit, the most royal tree I have seen. Its fruits were worthy of such a parent ; large as Italian chestnuts, they had a rich, sweet flavor that no ordinary nuts of the kind had. This tree was doubtless thrifty when Walter Raleigh was spreading his cloak before Queen Elizabeth, and Captain John Smith was sighting Cape Ann, and William Pynchon over in the English Springfield was stirred in his conscience to seek a new home. One of its possible contemporaries still lingers, though in decrepitude, on Storrs Hill, just south of our Springfield ; and it is said

that it witnessed the descent of the Indians from their fort in that vicinity upon the infant settlement in 1675. I never knew certainly why the great meadow chestnut was destroyed; it was said because the children gathered all the nuts and trampled down the grass besides. But then the same man had owned it almost all his life, and it seemed odd he had not killed it before. I think it was the natural Yankee hatred of things "thet ain't no kinder use."

One day, as I was driving along one of the beautiful valleys of our hill-country, I overtook a spare, white-headed, wiry old man, and asked him to ride. It took but a word to show that he was Scotch; he had the "pawky e'en" and "canny mou'" of the Lowlands, and had a dry cut for every subject. His name, he said, was John Brown; espying a glint in my eye, no doubt, — for it was the winter of 1859-60, — he said: "Aye, there was never but one great John Brown, — and they've hangit him, — but they'll never hang me. There's good and there's bad in being great John Browns." Presently we came to what had been a particularly pretty piece of road; the river curved around a point of ledge, and was bordered by yellow and black birches, beeches, maples, and hemlocks. On the uphill side of the road crept the stoniest, barrenest of pastures, and that too had been adorned and hidden by trees. Now the man who owned the pasture, and, oh, mockery! the trees, had scores of acres of untouched woodland, and no excuse for felling these embowering shades except that it was "handy

to load up." Because of that, he had stripped the hillside. I could not help a groan for the slaughter. "Hech!" said my friend Brown, "don't ye know that Ed would sell all the beauty on God's arth for three cents, and then think he 'd cheated the buyer?"

SOUL OF THE SPELL.



HE heavens drew nearer and listened ;
The earth throbbed in tune and in time ;
The dew in the moonlight that glistened
Shone into rhythm and rhyme.

The drowsy gay blackbird above me
Stirred in his sweet early rest,
And chirped out a drowsy " Oh love me ! "
To the brown downy mate of his nest.

Nay, the brook that talked o'er the pebbles
Spoke for my hesitant heart
In mellow contraltos and trebles
The love that I longed to impart.

Then I broke the sweet hush that enraptured
With a word that was soul of the spell ;
And two hearts were evermore captured,
Two lives into harmony fell.

EXPECTANT DAWN.



THE dawn that dispels sleep, in Nature is only welcome. The cows that have drowsed since evening twilight, crouched in ungainly comfort on the ground, like half-produced sphinxes to the night-wanderer's vague vision, with now and then a moment's munching of the cud in their dreams, wake at its first gray hints, upheave their clumsy bodies, and fall to browsing daintily near the pasture bars, their breaths as sweet as the milky burden of their generous udders. The birds stir in the high boughs and the bushes, call and twitter to each other, preen their ruffled feathers, and shake slumber from their joyous throats in song. The fragrances of herb and flower, the rose's charm and the balsam of the firs, exhale upon the dewy air. The east's perpetual miracle, coursing the globe forever from its source in the mid-Pacific waters, is at the verge of revelation. The riddle of the night's dream opens its mystery as the lighter tints are absorbed into the splendid heraldry of morn. Earth with a rich expectancy awaits the new revelation, — always at hand, ever withdrawn, going on with the dawn to new days.

FOR WHAT EARTH WAITS.



OUT of the reverence which contemplation breeds, the strange sense of this burden of waiting often grows, and blends with the loveliness of earth until it is a pain. Then does the spirit of prayer, the impulse of worship, wake, and renew communion with the Father of spirits. There is no other poet, perhaps, to whose company in such moods one can more confidently turn than to Henry Vaughan's; one who had not the great gifts of far scope and command, but knew Nature and God in his singular, often quaint fashion. Many a saunter have I had with this "Swan of Usk," beside streams as beautiful as his own; and yet his treasury is not exhausted, but gives forth things new and old. It was not then with surprise that, listening for Vaughan's word as all this foregoing thought of dawn came by, I found him thinking my original idea, but wrought in his devouter mind to an issue that could never have occurred to me. The hour wakened in him the anticipation of the coming of that mystic bridegroom told of in the parable of Jesus, and it seemed to him that was the secret of the waiting of the earth. Not at evening, or at midnight, might the bridegroom come, but rather —

“—— shall these early, fragrant hours
Unlock thy bowers?
And with their blush of light descry
Thy locks crowned with eternity?
Indeed, it is the only time
That with thy glory best doth chime;
All now are stirring, every field
Full hymns doth yield;
The whole creation shakes off night,
And for thy shadow looks the light;
Stars now vanish without number,
Sleepy planets set and slumber,
The pury clouds disband and scatter,
All expect some sudden matter;
Not one beam triumphs, but from far
That morning star.”

MORNING FOG.



SOMETIMES in summer day opens with a lifting and falling fog over the banks and meadows by the water-courses, — a flighty, dancing fog, that wavers as if about to break and vanish under the setting moon ; rises high toward the zenith and blots the pale luminary out of sight, then partly in vagrant tatters dissipates, or climbs into cloudland, and in greater part falls back, thickens and fills the valleys, as molten metal fills the founder's moulds. There it rests ; the light airs that prophesy dawn, dipping into its white fields and drifting off and up sprays and fringes of mist, until suddenly as lightning out of the glimmering east flames a long red ray. The clear dart of Apollo cleaves the sleeping fog, and shuddering from hill to hill the heavy mass shakes into great fragments, which roll up the narrower valleys and thicken the forest air, or soar on the wings of the morning unto the uttermost parts of the earth. A few minutes in our wide valley is often enough for this wonderful work, but in the narrow defiles of the Berkshire ranges it is the work of hours.

UPON THE LEDGE.



HERE the wild mountain overhangs
Its fringing forests, brink o'er brink,
Height reaching over height, to catch
The earliest dews that sunlight drink
And echo back the thunder clangs,—

There on the gray out-crowding spur,
Above the hospitable pine
Within whose odorous shades do hatch
Untroubled many a woodbird fine,
And aromatic zephyrs stir, —

Here rested through long summer days
A poet, though he knew it not ;
The crannied ledge his perfect home,
And Nature his one friend, I wot,
Nor aught to him the world's false ways.

Ere life's stern burden on him pressed
Here was he happy as the air, —
The pure wild winds that restless roam ;
Beneath him smiled the valley fair,
But on the heights he dreamed in rest.

WILD STRAWBERRIES.



THE strawberry is the prevailing topic of the day in our latitude, and may indeed be said, using an innocent old joke, to be in every one's mouth. There is very seldom anything in such unanimous favor, and yet even the strawberry has critics, — people who think that Dr. Whately was altogether too effusive in his opinion that "Doubtless God might have made a better berry, but doubtless he never did." Now Whately was strong in his logic, and his postulate without question concerned the ideal, the perfect, strawberry. He could not safely have made any corresponding dictum about man, observe, because he could not have produced the ideal man in sufficient numbers to sustain the postulate. But he could, and I presume did, instantly back up his statement about the strawberry with a lordly dish of the fruit, each individual specimen more delicious than the one which preceded it. If after such a feast as that any one should remain critical, it would be plain that nothing short of ambrosia would do for his palate.

Still there are odds in strawberries, and have been these five hundred years that we know of their cultivation. My Lord Bishop of Ely, in Henry the Fifth's

time, if we may believe Shakspeare, thought that the strawberry was best wild, and so accounted for the brilliant self-revelation of King Harry after his reckless youth, —

“ The strawberry grows underneath the nettle,
And wholesome berries thrive and ripen best,
Neighbored by fruit of baser quality.”

Now his Grace of Ely spake not ignorantly ; he knew well what could be done with the berry beyond what Nature has done, for the dignitaries of the Church were epicures, and all new or exotic fashions in fruits or flowers or vegetables were sure to be exploited first in their gardens and conservatories. The episcopal garden of Ely, in particular, — we know by the strategic request of Gloster to the bishop of his time, some seventy years later, — was noted for this very species of fruit, —

“ My Lord of Ely, when I was last in Holborn
I saw good strawberries in your garden there ; ”

as in all probability royal Harry might have said. Well, to recur, after a long experience of the derived and exaggerated varieties, I agree with the prelate who had so well noticed the way of Nature with the strawberry. Civilization costs as well as makes character, so that there are rich qualities in the savage that the scholar lacks ; and the strawberry has paid for its culture and bulk with the loss of that wild delicacy and fragrance of the fields for which there is no compensation in tape-measure records of circumferences.

And in the old country days of youth the strawberry season was marked by fine liberal delights in Nature's wide garden of the hill-sides and the meadows which are worth more in the remembrance than anything that can be got out of the rich patch among the corn and beans and tomatoes where the fattened berry of the fruiterer grows. The dew yet bows down the long grasses at the edge of the thicket, and sparkles in splendid color from the upper half of the hill in the sunlight when you reach the field. The cows look up from their eager morning cropping, and slowly wander over the turn of the slope, and disappear. The wood-thrush warbles ; and the phoebe calls in a curious, interested tone which finally becomes vexatious, it is so obtrusive, and yet amounts to nothing, after all. The bobolink may perhaps fling himself off the wild apple-tree in a delirium of glee ; and there will surely be an undertone from that bouncing basso, the bumble-bee, as he teases the clover-heads and disdains the buttercups.

Your basket does not fill very fast. You will not, thinking only of your own convenience, pluck the stems with their burden of green berries ; for there are others to come for the next ripening, even if you do not. The wild strawberry is not always obvious. It is shy, given to hiding under a clover or a dock, or at the edges of the ledge ; and ever and anon you gather one of the tiny fruit and find only a red leaf in your fingers, — a veritable fairy trick, such as well might happen to you in this wild scene. When you lay


hands upon a mammoth of the fields, a berry actually as much as half an inch in diameter, then what a sense of treasure trove, and admiration for the benignity of Nature in so prosperous a growth ! On the strength of finding half a dozen such in succession, you venture to taste the ripest one ; and if your palate be blest with a memory, you will never in after years match that melting union of fragrance and flavor, an aroma of the clean earth and wild grass, free airs and woodland odors, blent with the essence of honeyed spices. Nature, when she has her way, is wont to indulge in such perfections.

As the heat thickens, the murmurous pine wood invites to rest on the brown carpet its fallen needles form. The slender, elegant woodberry one finds here beside the path ; an invalid, spirituelle look it has, and its taste is lightly acid, and more pleasing than its coarse, sharp neighbor, the bright young wintergreen. At the borders of the wood the mountain laurel blooms, each bush a glorious bouquet of pink and white, fit for a king's parterre. Thus seated and surrounded, with all things rejoicing in the height of the year's beauty and life without, you may feel a deeper feeling, yet one not inharmonious with the general happiness, stir and strengthen in your heart and brain. There is a great deal more to be got from strawberry-picking than the berries, — for is there not the bird-song and the insect-chirp and squirrel-chatter, the dew and the sun, the waving grass with its daisies, the grapevine over the gray ledge, the royal laurel, and these solemn-sounding

pinus, with so many free, pure, worshipful thoughts in them all, that are as good food as the best of berries? These are the angels that talked with men in the fields of old, and told them of God and themselves. There is indeed no priest or shrine wanted for you, if you discover, in such ways as this, that —

“Man in the bush with God may meet.”

TWILIGHT CHARM.

HEN cool and humid night succeeds the heat
Of summer day, and the sweet welcome
breeze

Echoes the croak of marish-haunting frogs,
Wafts from the woods low twittering notes of birds,
Brings from the fields rich breath of clover-bloom,
And from the gardens many mingling scents, —
The perfect fragrance of the frequent rose,
The spicy perfume of the border pink ; —

When dim and distant grows the dry, hot sky,
And in the sunset glory's waning glow
The pale stars brighten slowly, one by one ;
When mountain outlines soften into cloud,
And clouds seem like to far and misty hills ;
When grasshoppers do drone themselves to sleep,
And crickets chirp in changeless minor tone ;
And all sounds are subdued and undefined,
Suiting the charmed hour, nor day nor dark ; —

Then Nature's quiet tunes my heart to calm ;
I love to ramble with uncertain step
Through devious forest paths, and hear the leaves
Rustle in wildwood colloquy o'erhead,


And fallen twigs snap sharply underfoot,
While all the forest is reverberant
With blended crossing echoes of its life.

I love to sit and call up memories
Of bygone joy and sorrow ; all my grief
Is softened ; pain becometh shadowy,
And joys that were are sweeter to the heart,
Losing strange imperfections they had worn
What time they were my intimates, — for thus
May life drop its asperities awhile.

I love to sit with friends in sheltered ease,
And interchange remembered melody
Of the undying singers, whose high thought
Forever feeds the pure souls of the world ; —
To listen to slow music, pulsing out
On the still air, like heart-beats of a friend,
Strong with the chastened passion of a life,
Interpreting earth's cross and heaven's crown ;
Or else calm-chorded harmonies, like bells
Heard from a far-off monastery tower.

Yet better than all else, at this rare hour,
To stay in perfect, silent sympathy
With one who knows the word before I speak,
And so no word is spoken, but one thought
Thrills both, and breathes beyond all earth and time.

NOCTURNE.

PON the dusky pond I rest,
Vaguely afar the shores arise ;
The moon's thin crescent in the west
Gleams on the dim edge of a wood ;
The swift light clouds sweep up the skies,
And deepen night's still solitude.

The oars are still, the waters hushed,
No breath stirs in the willow leaves ;
The winds in upper air that rushed
Touch not this mystic atmosphere ;
And yet I hear a sound that grieves, —
A voice that speaks of grief and fear.

Ah, piteous note ! whence is thy woe
That mars the peace wherein I float ?
Art thou a mother bird, that so
Dost plain for nestlings stol'n away ?
Sure only this could weigh thy note
With such repairless agony ?

EYES FOR SEEING.

"If eyes were made for seeing,
'Then beauty is its own excuse for being.'"



EMERSON'S explanation of the rhodora's wasted bloom beside the wild-wood pool has become a proverb, like so many utterances of this wise and intimate poet, who never wrote a line that is trivial. The rhodora bloomed for the reed-bird and the poet ; and the beauty of the earth has patiently grown, developed, decayed and renewed itself in unappreciated plenty for leafy generations after generations, recompensed when one such eye as Emerson's, or of a lesser soul that yet can see, rests on it and delights in it, — recompensed in the Creator's sight in the sweet pleasure of his humbler creatures. Nature, that is so lovely and full of delight to the poet and the bird, is to thousands nothing but an arrangement of events and things more or less convenient. Her charms are not for the empty eye. The appreciation of natural beauty is a growth of enlightenment for the average of mankind ; in an unraised life of savagery, such as our red tribes lead, it is only an exceptional soul, the poet, upon whom the celestial gift of insight has been bestowed, who sees and impersonates the spirits of the

forest and the flowers, the winds and the stars. To the mass of them these are but stupidly accepted traditions, of whose origin they have lost the secret spring. But we have inherited the effects of long centuries of culture, and there is inevitably something of the influence of the artist and poet in all our feeling as we survey the loveliness of the earth.

A MORNING DREAM.



IN the hushed morning, ere the coming dawn
Had dimmed the light of palest stars, I
dreamed

I that dear lady met, who holds in pawn
My heart for love, and strangely then it seemed
The holy beauty that enshrined her soul,
As in a glamour, had vanished quite,
And seeing me, she sore bewept her dole ;
While I, as one astonished at the sight,
Still with the sad surprise and voiceless stayed,
Till in my heart new tenderness arose ;
My trembling lips on hers love's tribute paid,
Then at our kiss the evil spell did close —
Love's stronger magic rent the mask away,
Radiant her beauty shone in opening day !

SERENADES.

I.



H the lady I dream of is fair,

Very fair !

With a beauty beyond compare,

'T is so rare !

Walked we beneath the pale moon, that cast
Mystery round us as we passed ;
Soft were our footfalls on the still street,
Quiet the rhythm our two hearts beat ;
Magical echoes to every tread,
Magical shadows around us spread.

Bright lay the light of the moon on her hair, —
Silken brown hair !
Brighter the light of her soul in her eyes,
Tender brown eyes !

Oh the lady I dream of is fair,
Very fair !
And her face beyond compare
Sweet and rare !

Oh touch her not, trouble or care,
Tears or sighs, —
Sprinkle no gray in her hair
Dim not her tender brown eyes ;

Deem her too sacred, O Time,
For thy prey ;
Perfect and pure in her prime,
Bright always
Till called by her kindred, the angels,
To their choir,
Hymning in deathless evangel
High and higher !

Oh the lady I dream of is fair,
Oh, so fair !
With a beauty beyond compare
Sweet and rare !

II.

SLEEP ! sleep and dream
By the swift stream,
While the dews weep
On the earth ;
And the mirth
Of the elves, of the fairies, runs high !
And soft the winds sigh
A lullaby, —
Hist !
List !
I wist
That they sighed : Gently lie !
Sleep, lady, sleep !

Care wings her flight,
World drops from sight,
Dies with the day
From thy heart :

Fancies dart
Through thy slumbers in loveliest guise,
O'er thy tender brown eyes
Each fringed lid lies
Still —


Still !
Spirits fill
Dreams with sweetest surprise !
Sleep, lady, sleep !

Sprites of the air !
Tenderly care
O'er her pure rest.
From her warn

Till the morn
Sylphs of evil and mischievous elves ;
Slumbrous peace be her guest,
And your delicate selves —

Hear !
Hear !
Be ye near,
Brightest visions and best !
Sleep, lady, sleep !

THE SCYTHER OUT OF FASHION.

T is a melancholy fact that just in proportion as we learn how to do things in a labor-saving way, we abandon the picturesque and pleasurable aspects of labor. In Adam's original calling every step forward has been an æsthetic loss. It is true that most of these steps have been long enough in taking. We reckon among the lamentable losses of modern progress the music and poetry of the scythe ; and yet the scythe dates back, with hardly a doubt, to the primitive period of Tubal Cain. As ancient as agriculture is the scythe ; and it held its own, east and west, within the memory of man, — even of a young man. Not Egypt itself has furnished a picture of a mowing-machine, and Chinese annals are silent on the subject. Now the mowing-machine rules in the fields and the lawn-mower in the city yards, and the scythe is almost obsolete.

This noble weapon in all its forms — the sickle for one hand, the scythe for two, paralleling the dagger and the two-handed sword — was in high favor in ancient times ; it harvested many fields, of grain and men, and was celebrated in prose and verse. Conquerors owed victories to the cruel curved blades on their chariot wheels, which, as Shirley says, —

“ Plant fresh laurels where they kill ; ”

and with like instruments the Latin farmers reaped the ripened grain, —

“ *Falcem maturis qursquam supponat aristis,*” —

as Virgil describes it in his beautiful *Georgics*. Indeed, it is he who tells us that the very tools of harvest were in war taken to serve the murderous purposes of men,—

“ The plow receiveth no more its honor due ;
The fields are waste ; their tillers are all afar ;
The curvèd sickle is taken and shaped anew
Into a pitiless brand.”

It is perhaps a merely fanciful analogy of letters that derives the word “scythe” from the same root as the name of the Scythian race ; but it bears a fine suggestion of kinship, for the Scythians were a very incisive and levelling sort of folk. Now-a-days it is not so easy to christen a nation or an implement. Nobody could derive anything from such an awkward compound as “mowing-machine,” and it is entirely intractable for purposes of poetry. Poetry went out of harvest when these engines of multiplied scissor-blades came in. The charm and cheer of hay-making can never be what they were when the scythe was the potent weapon. Then they used to sing in the country such hearty songs as this : —

“ When early morning’s ruddy light
Bids man to labor go,
We haste with scythes all sharp and bright
The meadow grass to mow ;

We mowers — ral de dal day !
We cut the lilies and hay — hey, hey ?
Hay — hey, hey ?
Hay, — heyday ! yes, hay, — heyday !
We cut the lilies and hay.”

That was never timed to the motion of a mowing-machine. There is, too, a delight and triumph in swinging a scythe that nobody can ever find in driving a mower. To cut a clean, broad swath in the dewy grass, with daisies and clover heads dropping under one's feet, — to spare a tuft by a stone because of a ground-bird's nestlings, not yet equal to flight, — to pause for a moment as the wren cheerily salutes his early visitor, — to note the wild bee in his hurried dash around one's ears and into the freshest blossom in advance, — to rest beside the cool copse and pluck the nectareous cup of the red raspberry, — to lean at the edge of the field on the lichen-broidered stone-wall, as the saucy chipmunk flips up his tail and dips into its covert passages, — these, and so many other, episodic graces of haying are quite abolished by the chirr-whirr, click-clack, of the new-fangled engine. That does not pause for such trifles, — the tiny songsters are never thought of by those salient blades, nor can the man who drives the mower stop to dirge a daisy, like a new Burns, or hear any whispers of Nature, however appealing.

This is the inexorable change of scientific civilization. Something divine and rare departs where the human and convenient come in. Agriculture is getting to be

a complex and frightful enterprise, from which the young man recoils. One must be fairly a capitalist before he dare take up the primitive vocation of the race. It seems more promising to start pedler than farmer. Let us be fair, — there are advantages in the new ways, and these must be thought on while we regret the degradation of the scythe to the small office of “trimming up” around the shrubs and trees and flower-beds, and along the fences and walls, and in the marshy swale where more than the weight of a man would be too much. For instance, there is the celebrated ballad of the fathers, —

“On Springfield mountain there did dwell
A likely youth I knew full well;
Leftenant Myrick’s only son, —
A likely youth, not twenty-one.”

This young man, the song proceeds to relate with the same simplicity, went mowing around the lot, one fine summer day, until, alas! —

“A p’ison sarpint bit his heel,”

and ended his mortal history, — a fatality which could not have happened had young Mr. Myrick been perched high up on the iron seat of the modern machine, as all the Wilbraham farmers do their mowing now-a-days. While this would have been pleasanter for the Myrick family and circle of friends, on the other hand we should have missed of the ballad. Yet the scythe, decadent save in a rural nook here and

there, will perennially survive on the almanac cover, over the shoulder of old Time, with his solitary lock of hair defying the pursuer as he flies, and that grewsome blade betokening his perseverance in the old line of business.


WOE IN THE NEST.



THRUSH in the orchard sings, —
Though 't is late for a thrush to speak ;
A thrush beats out, though his wings
Are heavy with sleep, and weak.
Stay, bird with your startled call,
Your frightened dash in the dark,
For the nestlings will stir and fall, —
They plain, they bemoan, — ah, hark !

Oh well knows the sad father-thrush
That his birdlings do plain and bemoan ;
Oh vainly he chirps them to hush,
And vainly he broods them alone !
His mate, their sweet mother, is not, —
Where, where lingers she from the nest ?
There is woe, there is death in the night
That the mother brings not to her nest !


JULY SHOWERS.

OW the air-currents enliven in a swift summer shower, — the electric shock shaking the languor out of the sky, and the rain clearing it into earth ! A half-hour ago the wind was dry as the dusty road, and now the wafts that dash in at the window are cool as the gurgle of a brook, and smell of the clean earth, the moist grass, the beaten roses whose leaves lie pink beneath the bushes, and the hay that is cocked down in the meadow, whence huge loads have been coming through the afternoon, with steady horses before, and broad, flapping straw hats, presumably with men under them, on top. Here is one now ; and as the rain starts with a fresh rush, a boy climbs up the chain that catches the bind-pole, over the horses' haunches, and dexterously makes himself a great umbrella out of the last jag that was thrown on the load, — the raking-after at the edge of the lot. How the rain swoops after a sharp flash of lightning, swoop after swoop, like a flight of hawks sweeping across the field and alighting, one after another ! This is the fringe of the shower, which trails its great robes over other hills and fields.


As the pulsing trit-trit-trit of the patter on the roof slows and softens, and the retreating edges of the dark

clouds shine in snowy beauty, the birds begin to sing in the trees, which have been tossing and bending without the least regard for these pretty householders ; and there is an anxious note yonder which perhaps means that a nestling has fallen in the storm. The little birds are badly off at the best for a start in life ; learning to fly is no joke in itself, and then the cats are so apt to be at hand that it is a wonder any feathered pair can raise a family. It is strange that we should take such pains to pet and foster these enemies of our friends, these purring traitors to ourselves, these cousins of the tiger and the panther. But they are not so much worse than the boys with their guns and pistols ; the cats take the fledglings, and the boys the happy singers and their mates.


CONVENTIONS.

 EN are not satisfied with Nature as she wants to be ; and so, when a lawn grows golden with dandelions and happy with the pretty bluets and the white and blue violets, they come out with their brutal mowers and shear the whole into uniform green, — a very respectable color, and good for the eyes, as Hans Andersen's duck-mother said, but none the worse for a flower or two. It is a neat analogy of society convention, which cannot abide dandelions and violets, — within its pale ; outside, in the vulgar pastures, they may do well enough, but let them know their place. The same rule goes higher ; even a tree must not be eccentric, and the reprehensible habit an elm has of fringing its trunk with depending boughs must be corrected. Unless, indeed, a tree is so very ugly as to be a monstrosity ; then it becomes a pet, and is gracefully patronized.

THE WOODLAND BROOK.

OW many an inner woodland nook do I recall where a brook that was lively enough in spring now sleeps sluggishly in its dank moss bed between thick-clad stones, the clematis spreading its pale green bloom on the fence near by, and the wild turnip swelling its crude berries on the proud stand of Jack-in-the-pulpit, while the lightning-swift dragonflies dart and skewer the occasional pools with magic speed ! The heat is slumbrous ; and at the edge of a pool the girl and boy raspberrying pause and set down their pails and watch the vivid insects, wondering if they really have anything to do with the devil, or with darning-needles of any kind. The wonder is but sleepy, and the wonderers care nothing for its solution. Above the red-winged blackbird chirrups, and the red squirrel flips his saucy tail, uttering a sharp wild “yap” that revives the hearers to a sense of their alien presence. The water slips darkly and slowly beneath the bridge, and the bees hum in the meadow-sweet and the thimble-berry bloom. The farmer drives past to the village, and leaves undisturbed the peace of the glen. Where is “my house” and “your house,” when we have all out-doors ?

SUNDOWN MOUNTAIN.

EYOND the mountains' dusky mass
The sun his warm descent delays ;
The lowering cloud his loath last rays
Suffuse with crimson veins, that pass
To melt in mellow haze.

O'er the great hills a ruddy sea
The cloud-rack lifts and underlies ;
Above aerial headlands rise,
Glowing with hues that change and flee
To faint in orange skies.


There, like a pilgrim band, depart
Of russet clouds a lessening train,
That as in distant heights they wane
Quick into delicate flame out-start,
And die in splendid pain.

Watch how the deeper fires die out ;
The clouds that thicken down the west
Dark on the sombre Catskills rest ;
Gray grow the mountains round about,
And dim Taconic's crest.

From the broad valley comes no sound ;
But in the thicket's close retreat
The birds sing drowsily and sweet ;
The twilight throbs with peace profound, —
Peace for the soul most meet.

Now draw the infinite heavens near ;
And swiftly blending into white
The last tints deepen into light
Intense and tremulously clear, —
Day's message to the night.

MOUNTAIN WIND.

OW the late grass fields are rich with the consummate fragrance of hay, and the rye lies in cradle-heaps, with the fading pink bloom of the bindweed. The corn wilts in the fervent heat, and the grape swells its shining pale globes beneath its broad leaves, while its new arms stray out with seeking tendrils. The nodding buff plumes of the imperial chestnut reflect the sunshine, glorifying the mountain forests. The beauties of earth are not the pallid, shrinking graces of spring-tide, nor like those that mark the fresh, ingenuous fulness of odorous June, but such as bespeak the warm luxury of midsummer's hospitable success. The trees are at their plenitude of verdurous glory, and the roadsides bloom with splendid fiery lilies, feathery spiræas, brave golden-rods and honest ox-eye daisies. To look down across a hill-top meadow, yet untouched by the mower, with its waving grasses and flowers, until the eyes rest where —


Broods the dusk slumber of the woods,

is to gain an indescribable sense of the true inner delight of Nature, at work and in repose. No day so burning that the breeze fails to visit the hill-tops, stir

the tree-boughs, ruffle the lake, inspire the birds, and refresh the farmer in the field, the housewife in the shady porch, and the stranger that is within their gates, —breathing such beneficence of refreshment and such living purity that there alone does it seem verily and wholly the wind of heaven.

“The mountain wind ! most spiritual thing of all
The wide earth knows ! when in the sultry time
He stoops him from his vast cœrulean hall,
He seems the breath of a celestial clime.”

THE BREATH OF NATURE.

LEST is the sweetness of the air
That blows from out the clover mead ;
It doth the sensuous fancy feed
With all that 's happy, free and fair.

It lifts the sordid heart of work
To gracious heights of recompense,
Where quiet is each lower sense,
Where no unworthy passions lurk.

But I drink in the tender sky,
The silent, listening grace of earth,
The love that gave each blossom birth,
The strength that holds the pine ahigh.

The gracious haze that veils the hills,
The busy cheer of bird and bee,
And squirrel's chat, and children's glee,
All serve to swell the joy that fills

My soul, that faithful to its source
Alone harmonious can sound
Where Nature breathes in life profound,
And throngs each pulse with throbbing force.

SEA-SHORE.

AND still it does not always satisfy. In those weary heats wherein the grasshopper and everything else becomes a burden, this mountain wind, with all its careering freedom and bounteous perfume of field and forest, is but a makeshift. The true elixir in midsummer faintness is the salt tonic of ocean, the essence of the world-embracing seas. Some cannot feel its full power unless free of the land, dandled by the waves and uncertain as to their horizons ; but perhaps they get little on a voyage that is more valuable than what they might have on shore,—besides sea-sickness. It is a matter of temperament, however, and to some it is delight to battle with the clashing elements, to “revel in their stormy faculties,” to sport with ocean and

“ — on her breast to be
Borne like a bubble onward.”

The sea needs longer knowing than the hills, which to one who has the password of Nature offer at once their unstaled intimacy. The sea gives nothing to the stranger at the first, unless he find it in one of its grand moods, and it is not in such moods that friendship is formed. Summers and winters for a life are

not too much to gain and satisfy that deep charm which the waves enfold. It is a mightier spell than that of the hills, for among them there abides no challenging personality, but the encompassing spirit of Nature ; while the sea is itself personal, and the spirit that rides upon its waters is the spirit of God.

The sea at calm of receding tide, beneath a burning sky and a still air, presents a curious aspect of sleeping power, — but only to one who has looked upon that power's manifestation. To see it thus at first is not to cry, with Xenophon's Greeks, "Thalatta ! Thalatta !" but to echo the disappointed exclamation of Gebir, —

"Is this the mighty ocean ? Is this all ?"

Yet after knowing the ways of the waves, the sea is never more impressive than in this feline beauty of quiet, when the ripples make their purring murmur on the beach, and the sun lines the horizon with a band of blinding white.

A better first meeting is as the surf rolls in strong at flood-tide, either on sand or shingle, or against the cliffs of some stern coast. Except when on shipboard in mid-ocean, the ship itself an inconsequent speck on a limitless expanse, man can hardly feel more insignificant than in facing a surf, urged by tide and beaten by winds up the beach. Each wave that curls and crests itself seems dashing down upon his head ; and it is hard to realize the illusion, and that the rolling water will in a few moments fling its highest foam beneath

his feet. Often the illusion extends farther, so that the whole ocean from the sky-line seems majestic rapids, irresistibly pouring to the land.

The rocks reveal new phases. High on some cliff one looks upon broken masses of its constituent rock hurled in shapeless confusion around its base, and curiously observes where at some future instant the part on which one sits shall yield to the endless onset and join these age-old fragments. At each side the pounding waves have worn long galleries through softer strata, or beneath have carved "the coastwise mountain into caves." They dash and sprinkle spray far up the crag, then drop and wash around its base, among the stones they have for ages been rounding and polishing, and retreat and gather for new assaults. With untiring interest and question one watches these blows, — so ponderous, so gracefully foam-fringed, — so notably alike, so continually varied, — so individual and irregular, so harmonious and rhythmic. These aspects of the sea, in which the white sails gleam on its wide fields, and it seems the welcoming or subject friend of man, are but its superficial character. Into its darker depths we who seek midsummer rest will not now pry ; it may chance a word shall utter thence unsought. For it is on the shore that the ocean wreaks its power in expression ; there, not on its bosom, that its voice is clearly heard ; thence that its magic sends, and thither that it draws them "that go down unto the great deep." It was on the shore that Emerson heard the sea declare itself —

“The opaline, the plentiful and strong,
Yet beautiful as is a rose in June,
Fresh as the trickling rainbow of July,” —

rest-giver, food-purveyor, health-bestower, sovereign
and minister, builder and destroyer, gatherer and dis-
perser, mystical sorcerer, —

“Illusion dwells forever with the wave.
I know what spells are laid. Leave me to deal
With credulous and imaginative man.
For though he scoop my water in his palm,
A few rods off he deems it gems and clouds.
Planting strange fruits and sunshine on the shore,
I make some coast alluring, some lone isle,
To distant men, who must go there or die.”

RESTING OR WAKING.



THE sea-shore is full of wonder, yet full of rest. Nowhere can man be more potently awake, nowhere more happily asleep. The lull of the waves on the beach is better than any other croon of babyhood or echo of life. And when the storm rises, and the rush of the waters up the sands or their dash upon the rocks is heard, and the foamy spray tops the crag and booms and dashes far a-land, the whole sense wakes, and the pulse quickens to delight in elemental strife. The god of the storms knows well how the life of his creatures stirs under the assault of his minions of wind and rain and lightning. In the dawn that follows a night of storm, when everything smiles as if no force of Nature had been wrenched to its limit, what a surprise the day is ! Has there ever before been a dawn like this ?

HYLAS !



HYLAS ! Hylas ! Hylas !
Echoes in the woody dell
Where the sweetest waters well ;
Sounds along the rocky hill,
Dancing down the dancing rill ;
Cries across the springy field,
Where the waters are unsealed ;
Dies upon the vacant shore,
Lost and lackt forevermore,—
Hylas ! Hylas !

Hylas ! Hylas ! Hylas !
He was but a stripling boy,
Why is he the strong man's joy ?
Why should Herakles lament
Youth upon death's errand sent ?
For it was the cup of health
Drank too deeply earned the wealth
Of a rest as sweet as life
And a ransom from its strife, —
Hylas ! Hylas !

Hylas ! Hylas ! Hylas !
Though the pain may fail at length,
Love's no less divine than strength ;

Grace and tenderness have part
Ever in the strongest heart ;
To the man that is a force
Beauty is an ardent source ;
And the poet brings a light
Needed for the dusky fight.
Hylas ! Hylas !

FLOTSAM.



HE shore is full of interest ; for besides its shining sands and the beauty and glory of the sky and waves, there is always something to tell one of the humanity that has been trying the deep ever since the world and its ventures were. I came suddenly one day, while picking up little shells for the children, and now and then startling a hermit crab in his stolen abode, to a great square box, incrustated with sea-weed and green with decay, with stiff ropes in its weather-beaten sides, which must have been the dump-cart of a whaler, journeying no one could tell how far, to rest where whaler had not anchored or departed for thirty years. Another time I struck upon the ribs of a venerable wreck, — nothing more than a schooner, — but what bereavement its loss might have entailed, how could I guess? An old man I met on the Cape said : “ I have followed the sea nigh forty years, and my sons are on the waters now, — those that are living. John’s widow, she keeps house for me, and Jacob’s children are with me, but only the Lord knows where John’s bones and Jacob’s lie, — off George’s, I suppose. I hain’t been out this many years, and I suppose I sha’n’t go out again.” “ Do you see,” he said at another

time, "how the apple-trees scooch all around here? It's the way everything does that grows hereabout. There ain't anything that don't have to scooch on the Cape."

Yes, the shore tells what the sea is, and the realities of voyage are less true than to the wise dreamer the visions of the beach, —

"The middle waves contain no crimson dulse,
Its deeper waves cast up no pearls to view.
Along the shore my hand is on its pulse,
And I converse with many a shipwrecked crew."

“DOGTOWN.”



ON a certain stormy promontory of our eastern coast, overlooking the Atlantic and many a bay and estuary, the saunterer comes unawares to signs of former habitation. Walled ways, with almost obliterated tracks of horses and wheels beneath the scant growth of pasture grasses, indicate a village ; and by their side, close to the rude stone-walls, are seen depressions that, bounded by ruinous masonry, show the locations of its houses. Gooseberries starve slowly in these cellars, where snakes now make their convenient homes. Here and there a broad door-stone, worn with the impress of many feet, brings more forcibly to the imagination the current of life that once pressed along the desolate streets. Just one spot exhibits the charm of childhood, lingering for more than half a century ; it is where a semicircle of stones is stretched from corner to corner of the base of a table-rock jutting from a hill-side, and near it the remnants of a complete circle once similarly marked out. Amid this waste of ledge and boulder it is inexpressibly pleasant to find the light of childhood shining ; to fancy the little folks “ playing circus,” or luxuriating in giants’ castles and fairy spells, acting their stories in happy unconsciousness of the destined dulness and hardship of their lives. The last inhabitant of the desolate spot hanged himself in the misery of deserted age.

CATECHU FROM THE "PERUVIAN."



THE old man sat there on an old creel, with a net over his knees, and others on the sand near him: one stretched out carefully and fastened by thole-pins past usefulness in their original capacity, others in a heap; all more or less ragged, telling of their service and the work of lively fish, or of stakes, or of a casual anchor-fluke caught upon. The little house behind him, whose rooms must be so low that he can barely clear his head, stands in the very white sand, almost at the edge of the water, as if it had been brought in by a tide, — and not a very high tide either, — and might be carried out by the next. Only the bay looks far too dull and peaceful for that; and then the companionship of a tool-house, somewhat farther removed, forbids the notion.

All this while the old man sits, net on knee; catching up each rent with a great wooden needle laden with twine, and rubbing each strand with some dull red substance. It is a lonely spot, with its warm white sands rutted deep in the road and stretching all around, up the low hills which encircle and shelter the first harbor of the Pilgrims; and their dwarfed pines and bayberry bushes do not extend here, where the only green that

breaks the monotony is the light, dry hue of the beach grass, — for there is a little patch of it fenced in, as in inland villages the flower-beds are protected. This beach grass is a curious plant, devised by Nature to hold the earth together, — as Cape Cod folk know. Its spiry tufts suck life from the dead sand, thickening and building higher each year to keep its head above the sands, so that often its base root is three or four feet below the surface. The wind, continually shifting the beach sands, piles them around this grass, which rises to surmount them, and so creates the land and rebukes the sea. After a storm every tuft has a series of fine circles engraved around it on the hard, packed sands by the bending, wiry grass points. But there has been no storm here of late, and the skies are of the sweetest summer blue, as the old man repairs his nets.

“Wal, cap’in, katkewin’ on ’em, be ye?”

“I be.”

“Wher’d ye git yer katkew?”

“It’s some o’ that from the ‘Peruvian.’”

“Ye don’t say! Got a good lot on ’t, ain’t ye?”

“’Nough to last a year ’r so more.”

Then a pause, and a “Day to ye!” and the fisherman passes on. The old man looks up and draws a long breath. “Wal,” says he, “Eben knew all that afore.” And he adds, with a shrewd squint, “Ain’t it ridic’lous ’t men say so much that ain’t no kinder use?”

If this were a warning, as perhaps it was meant to be, it fails of its mark, for the old sailor has to tell the

land-lubber how catechu preserves the nets, and then how it was that he got his stock of the gum from the flotsam of the barque "Peruvian" of Boston from "the golden South Americas," which went to pieces on "the Backside" years ago on a stormy March night.

The old fisherman had not sailed of late ; he left that for the boys, who were all out now, while he was catechuing nets against time of need. They picked up many things after wrecks. There over the big tool-house door was the lettered prow of some barque ; most of the gilt metal letters were gone, but one could still read "— ABETH." And there were two or three odd oars in the corner. As for the "Peruvian," — "there wan't a piece of her as big as that come ashore." He had charge of the Humane Society's hut over on the Backside that year, — it was before the Federal Government took that into its own hands. His duties were to keep in the hut crackers and a few other articles of food, and blankets, and materials for a fire, and a stoveful ready to light. If a shipwrecked mariner were to chance to find the little hut, it might save his life ; and there had been many to thank this advanced hand of humanity, although there was no light to guide them, and to reach the hut from the beach on which they were thrown they must climb sand bluffs from twenty to thirty feet high, and find their way over the pathless desert in what way they best could. "I've h'ard," said the old man, "about men mean 'nough to steal pennies off the eyes of their dead mother, but I


know there are them meaner yit, for time an' ag'in I've had every bit of the crackers and molasses in that hut etten up an' made way with by felluhs that wa'n't wrecked no more 'n ye be."

That night in early March the old man knew it was going to be rough over on the Backside, and he told his boy they had better get ready. So they loaded the cart with boats and ropes, and put in blankets, and turned in early to sleep. He did n't sleep sound, somehow ; he supposes he felt uneasy ; and about four o'clock he roused his boy, and they harnessed and started over. It was bitter cold, and "black as black," and the lanterns did n't show but a "dr'adful little ways." It was pretty quiet inside the Cape ; but when they got over the rise, the force and noise of the wind and the rain, and then the rage and roar of the ocean, were altogether so tremendous that they could n't hear each a word the other said, sitting side by side on the same seat. They could see the lips move, but as if they were actors in a pantomime. He had to lean over and shout his loudest directly into his boy's ear to tell him where to drive, — for he himself was holding the lanterns. When they got to the bluff where the house was, there was nothing to do but wait for the morning. Nothing was to be seen ; and that terrible rushing, pounding rage of the wild Atlantic deafened them. Finally the gray pallor of dawn grew into the sky, and the eye began to separate it from the sea, — even as when God first divided the waters which are over

the firmament from the waters which are under the firmament. As the day lightened the wind went down, and it became possible to speak to each other, but they had to yell then. The sea was full of tossing spars and timbers, but nothing came to shore to stay that day, and the waves continued to dash over the beach and far up the bluff with sullen roaring. The next day there was a body washed up ; and then for a fortnight along the Backside horrid remnants of humanity were found, sometimes buried deep in the sand, — and some are buried there now, said the old man, for there was never account made of all the crew of the " Peruvian," though there were some unidentifiable fragments found. Some of the cargo was rescued from the sands, the catechu among the rest, and the fishermen picked up the splintered timbers for kindlings.

" I don't forgit yit when the cap'n's body was found. There wa' n't a rag on it but a pair of injy-rubber boots. And though it looked like, they said, the face was half gone, and we squeezed a half a peck of sea-fleas out of his arms. Them sea-fleas just burrow under the skin and eat out everything, till there ain't nothin' left atween it and the bone. The cap'n's brother was there. He just said, 'That's my brother, — that's Sam ;' then he turned 'round quick, and swallowed hard, and his face kinder worked, but he did n't say any more."

RELIGION AFLOAT.

ESTING on a wharf the other day, I was shortly attracted by two old seafaring men who were talking religion. It was exceedingly characteristic of New England, — this improvement of the fine, breezy summer afternoon. One of the men was thin, bent, gray, with a little gray tuft of beard under his chin, and a dumb, passive look in his eyes; he said little more than brief assents, and now and then a patient remark designed to keep the other going. The talker was shorter, stouter, and had a full crop of grizzly stubble on his face and neck, which were very brown and red, while his small, yellow-gray eyes twinkled amid the wrinkles that encompassed them, in complete contrast to his friend's. It seemed that he was busy with settling the essentials of religion; for he was telling of a common acquaintance who, he said, "kin jist swear the holiest aboard ship and pray the cussedest ashore of any man I ever see."

"It ain't," said the critical speaker, "a-goin' to count for much, *I* don't b'lieve, that a man's got all the prayer-meetin' yap at his tongue's eend. I guess I could learn that m'self if there was any 'casion for it." And then he ripped away at the easy parodies of formal prayers, such as all Yankees have heard from the

deacons. "I d' know," he said, "as there 's any reason why a man should think any more on't aboard than ashore, but I tell ye he doos, and you know it."

"Yeh, I do know it," the grave man responded.


"Look at us," resumed the other, "here we be, to-day, well,—well as kin be, doin' our reg'lar work, busy, thinkin' of nothin' special 'cept gittin' through the day and goin' home, and before night like 's not we're prōstrated right down, and next morning that stiff that we'll never limber up ag'in. Wal, that's quick enough, but then it's natur'. Out there,"—sweeping his arm to cover everything between here and England,— "a man's so darnedly alone. It ain't the same at all. Somehow a man don't amount to much alone. He wants somebody bigger 'n he is."

Here I lost a great deal of wisdom from the irruption of a lot of callow college youth who occupied all out-doors with their hilarity. When I caught the thread again the preacher was saying:—

"There ain't no use in half the things that's done for religion. There ain't no use in goin' to Rome or to Jerus'lem or to Meeky,—as them darned fools over in Arbi'a doos every year. What doos the Lord say? He says: 'Look at me! Come to me! I ain't in J'rus'lem! I ain't in Meeky! I'm right here, with every one of ye!' That's what he says. I tell ye I b'lieve him."

"That's the best way," assented the melancholy hearer.

THOMAS À KEMPIS'S MISTAKES.

O one who can feel the poetry or the pulse of devotion fails to enjoy that classic of devout hearts, the "Imitation of Christ," culled of Thomas à Kempis, and nevertheless it is an unhealthy and misleading book ; in every page the monkish habit and prejudice are visible, which render its pious directions anything but imitations of Christ. In one place we find the monk saying, "Keep not much company with young people and those who are without ;" and again, "Be not a friend to any one woman, but recommend all good women in general to God ;" "Fly the acquaintance of men," and admonitions of this sort are multiplied. Yet the associates of Jesus, who is called the Christ, were almost all young men, as he himself was ; and he was notably and intimately the friend of two or three women,—his familiar visits at the house of Mary and Martha in Bethany forming the most attractive episode of his busy career as a reformer. And although, like all serious and burdened souls, he had his moments of desire for solitude, and sought retreat even from his nearest friends, he never shunned the acquaintance of men ; but it was his one mission to cultivate it, to identify himself with the life

of his fellows, to arouse that emotion which remains to the world the one uniting influence of his career, — the enthusiasm of humanity, as the author of “*Ecce Homo*” well calls it. The treatise of À Kempis cultivates with exaggeration the negative virtues.

THE GIRLS OF BETHANY.



HE Lord who loved the girls of Bethany
Oft in their still abode reposed,
Beneath the vine-leaves cherished tenderly
What time the hot day closed.

With them the weary Teacher found relief
From vulgar clamors of the crowd,
From carping critics, from the wrong, the grief,
The pain, his heart that bowed.

They gave what neither gaping populace
Nor yet his dull adorers gave ;
Something he saw not in his Father's face,
But felt his nature crave.

They were his friends, their eyes met his with love,
Their lips with woman's welcome sweet ;
More dear to him than all the host's above
Their sympathy complete.

Thou first, O holy Mary, Mother mild,
Ever and alway blessèd be !
And close beside thee and thy mighty Child
The maids of Bethany !



III.

REPOSE AND RIPENING

FOR EARTH AND MAN.



III.

AUGUST REST.

The quiet August noon has come ;
A slumberous silence fills the sky ;
The fields are still, the woods are dumb,
In glassy sleep the waters lie.
And mark yon soft white clouds that rest
Above our vale, a moveless throng ;
The cattle on the mountain's breast
Enjoy the grateful shadow long.
For now a joy too deep for sound,
A peace no other season knows,
Hushes the heaven and wraps the ground, —
The blessing of supreme repose.

BRYANT.



HE type of August is expressed in these simply melodious lines with that happiness of feeling which broadly marked the chief poet of American nature. It is like a picture ; there is only one touch wanting, and that is supplied in another stanza, where the valleys are seen —

“Winding and widening, till they fade
In yon soft ring of summer haze.”

The atmosphere instils content ; beneath some ample shade one surveys the quiet of earth in a sympathy that desires nothing other than it is. The bird-song of morning June is not regretted ; it would be a rude intrusion ; this ceaseless chitter of the grassy insects is better music for the noonday of the year ; undisturbing it blends with the murmur of indolent thought. The cows stand in the pool with water over their dewlaps, chew the cud, and lazily brush away the flies. Over the wood the caw of a crow answering another far away is a note that deepens the hush of the scene. The blue air which hides like smoke the farthest hills draws thinner-filmed and deeper-tinted in the nearer range, till where the green ends and the blue begins no eye is fine enough to find. Earth, ripe, sweet and full of satisfying labor done and waiting harvests, rests and enjoys —

“The happy climax of the year.”

FLOATING CLOUDS.



O! as the shadow sweeps above the hill,
So sweeps the shade of doubt across my soul ;
A moment hides the sun, but not more swift
The wind that tosses in the trees than this
That stirs my bosom. Nothing rests therein
That more resembles night than these white drifts
The thick of storm that tramples down the earth.
The shadow does not stop the hawk's strong flight,
Nor doubt my spirit's wings. Above the oaks,
Above the solemn eminent firs he floats,
Or falls across the forest to his prey
Where he may spy it or in field or flood.
Above my custom'd dwelling soars my soul,
Or seeks its prize and food beyond its bounds,
Or rests within its holding ; either way
The shade is nothing but the hurried cloud, —
Nothing to me, nor shall be evermore.

CROWS IN CONGRESS.



HE conversational power of the crow can scarcely be appreciated unless witnessed in one of his "windy congresses," when the chatter is deafening, and even more confused than a debate in the Congress at Washington, or around the stove of a Yankee country store in winter evenings. I remember, one particular August day, scrambling with other children after blackberries on a Hampshire hill-side. It was a lot that had been "cut off" two or three years before, where the young chestnuts, maples, ashes and oaks were not so plenty as the berry bushes, and did not hide the outcropping ledges ; and here and there a tall remnant of the forest, nearly or quite dead, made desolate the region round about. From one of these sentinel trees, a great, gaunt pine, utterly leafless, — the mere skeleton and ghost of its once verdant dignities, — suddenly we heard the familiar caw. It was a resonant, a massive, a portentous cry, and compelled us to raise our eyes. On that lofty monument was perched a perfectly white crow, of as heroic size for his race as the Apollo Belvidere would be for mankind. He sat there with composure, well assured that there was no gun among the boys and


girls beneath,—*that* he took heed to before he alighted, be sure ; for a crow is no fool, —if he were, his race would long ago have been exterminated by the stupid farmers he tries to benefit. He repeated his patriarchal call in rhythmic succession, — and presently in this and that and the other direction crows began to appear, first singly, then in pairs, then in flights, until the hill-side sentinel trees were black with them, and their conversation became lively to the verge of riot, with such constant changes of location as reminded me of the exciting game of “merchants’ exchange.” This had lasted some ten or fifteen minutes, perhaps, when the master-spirit (by no means the “moderator”), with a most solemn and impressive caw, rose in the air, and all the rest, submitting to the decision, whatever it may have been, of the privy council on the blasted pine, spread their heavy wings and dispersed.

THE MORAL OF SCARECROWS.



THE crow is notoriously a knowing bird, and the farmers tell us that he has so much gumption in regard to their devices for protecting corn-fields from his depredations that none of them can be continued in a locality for many successive years. The scarecrow is of no use unless it assumes some extremely novel shape ; fanning-mill contrivances and other noisy machines they will perch upon and caw down with much contempt, and the ingenious suggestion of traps by means of twine strung around the field is finally exposed for the fraud it is. So now they dip the kernels in gas tar, which the crow does n't like — and the corn has no objection to. This is the common fate of make-believes, — they get found out for what they are, and then their past usefulness is of very small consequence. The farmers of humanity, notwithstanding, still keep putting up their scarecrows and their rattle-traps and their twine circles ; and all the derisive laughter and corn-stealing does not enlighten them.

PLOW-PLIGHT.

HE field on the hill-top was rich with red clover ; scattering white blooms of the red-stemmed buckwheat rose above the level, sparse rye stalks nodded their bearded heads, vervain and golden-rod made harmonies of purple and gold against the borders where the high grass tangled, faithful yarrow and the confident ox-eye daisy crowded along the fence, the evening primrose spread its rack of yellow cups, and the bindweed's silken tuba, which does not close in midday heat like its cousin the morning-glory, here and there blew beauty and perfume on the laden air. The grasshoppers were leaping over the flowers, their paths crossing as the meteors cross ; the bees were about their gentle thievery ; and that plunderer of beauty's very heart, the humming-bird, boomed around the convolvulus as if he had a presidential candidate in charge. A few late, dark-spotted butterflies flitted and droned over the field, and high in the road-side elm the cicada twanged like a buzz-saw, while the rent air fell in severed fragments on the listening ear. It was the full morning life of summer.

At nightfall there was no trace of it all. There was only an expanse of harrowed sand, a pair of horses

switching their tails despondently at the bars, and a stout, stubbly-bearded fellow unhitching the whiffletree from the harrow with one hand and giving a wipe to his sweaty brow with the other, while he said shortly, "Buckwheat, of course!" And so the sun set over the past. What the bee and hum-bird and cicada thought about it, who can fancy? In the elm it was now the katydid's turn; I had never noticed before how excessively mortuary the family expression is, how adapted to dirge such a spoliation. I had thoughts of asking the stout man at the bars if his name were really "Katy." The dogmatic assurance that Katy is exclusively a feminine nomination is preposterous, — but it prevented the question. It was, perhaps, Colin, or it may have been Patrick, who had put in the buckwheat, — and who did not appear likely to relish a joke. Still, if he had proved to be Katy, I should have known for once what Katy did. As it was, I looked rather sadly over to the woods, their dark foliage now relieved by the bright green of the chestnut burrs, when a winged shadow swept by like a sigh, and crossed the last orange rays of daylight, — that satanophany, the bat, flitting in from "the night's Plutonian shore" to emphasize the beautiful field's destruction, — "dust to dust."


CHANGING LIGHTS.



HERE is no view so full of the charm of invitation as that of distant hills. They lie so equably beautiful, so untouched by seasons ; summer, or autumn, or winter, there gather and abide the delicatest lights and softened shades. Such a wide sweep of undulating heights lie eastward, and even the splendors of sunset face to face do not give such pleasurable vision as the changing hues of declining day on these far hills. The long rays lie in indescribably delicate lilac ; a cloud floats over and turns them one by one a vague blue, as deep as mystery though nowise dark, — a color indeed like that of the “imperial encaustic ink, which by the laws of the Roman Empire it was death for any but the Roman Emperor himself to use,” as Southey said when he employed it in dedicating his inimitable whim-wham, “The Doctor,” “*To the Bhow Begum* KEDORA NIA-BARMA, — and one can easily imagine that it could have been no ordinary color to justify such a flourish as that. And this wonderful variance of hue goes on, — golden light, purple and blue, flying and deepening, till in the full sunset glow the heights flush with ineffable violet, — the most exquisite color in the spectrum, known to us only in the sunset,

but descending with the dawn and dwelling forever upon the storied hills of Greece, so that for a moment we can drink in the beauty of honeyed Hymettus, for a moment feel "the fair humanities of old religion" revive within the enchanted fancy.


BLUE HILLS BENEATH THE HAZE.

 BLUE hills beneath the haze
That broods o'er distant ways,
Whether ye may not hold
Secrets more dear than gold, —
This is the ever new
Puzzle within your blue.

Is 't not a softer sun
Whose smiles yon hills have won?
Is 't not a sweeter air
That folds the fields so fair?
Is 't not a finer rest
That I so fain would test?

The far thing beckons most,
The near becomes the lost.
Not what we have is worth,
But that which has no birth
Or breath within the ken
Of transitory men.

THE PASSING OF SUMMER.

HAT is the spell that rests in the melting twilight of sun and moon, the solemn growth of the stars into the nightly vault, the vanishing of azure into gray, the darkening of gray into unsearchable depths? What is it that fascinates in the union of cloud and water at the ocean's rim, that draws the voyager to far wild shores or northern fields of ice and snow? It is the mystery of uncertainty, the illusive neighborhood of beginning and ending, the border communion of real and imaginary; and akin to the enigma of our life, — its uncomprehended linking with the unguessed past and the undiscovered future.

Nature delights to elude, evade, yet half reveal, heightening the enchantment of beauty with the attraction of pursuit. How inviting the ever novel, ever renewed transitions that challenge search for their secret, and leave the searcher face to face with the inscrutable goddess, yet far as ever from her intimacy! We wander in her pleasaunces as wondering children, notwithstanding all our boasted discoveries and grave conclusions. At every turn new magic confronts us. Glimpses here and there we catch of vistas newly blooming, wealthily ripening, gorgeously fading or

shining with snow. No barriers mar the free perspective, but ever and anon we start to see that gates have inexorably closed in the path we trod, so unaware of limits ; nor can we by any divination mark the moment or the spot of change.

Thus we pass the boundary betwixt season and season with no sense of difference ; but one day suddenly we perceive that Nature has invisibly wrought her cordon of separation, and what was is not. Chiefly of all the summer lingers, loath to go. For all the cool caprices of the skies, the ominous cadences of the winds, the suggestive reddening of hasty maple boughs, the withering of the corn, — for all the rare prophetic frosts and cumulative warnings, summer clings and broods over the earth with loving warmth, and August goes unheeded.

Sometimes the thoughtful watcher of her moods notes how there falls upon all things a hush, as of Sabbath stillness, and yet a stillness that is not so much of peace and rest and labor done, like the later sacred quiet of October, as of patient expectance. It enfolds the hills and fields, forests and streams, and steals over the sense of him who stands in its mute spell, until, though the air be warm and caressing, the sun cheery and faithful in his visitations, and the world goes on with its business and frolic unmoved, — he shares the pained suspense, and waits the fate the green earth feels at hand.

Afterward comes the slow gray gathering of the clouds, that one day float fleecily across the soft skies ;

then, one night, crowd up beneath the zenith ; then disperse sulkily before the sun, to hang in a gloomy bank on the sunset horizon ; then swiftly assemble again, and thicken, and dispute possession of the firmament ; then conquer, and descend upon the land with sobbing winds and cold, drear rain : and the waiting of Nature is over.

When the storm is gone, and its ragged fragments irresolutely drift across the deep blue heavens, it is a changed earth that the sun looks upon. The verdure of the trees, which summer rains refresh, is dulled ; and beaten down beneath them are the leaves the rude dash has despoiled them of. The ferns have yielded their slender grace to the harsh rush of the storm, and the asters and golden-rods wear a conscious air of lordship, as they show brightly against the wayside fences and the hedgerows with their lessening leaves. There is a new quality in the air which tells that autumn is here. And when one looks back on those hushed and breathless days, he feels that Summer had then already gone, and only the passionate warmth of her farewell was lingering to beguile.

MY GOOD FRIEND !

"Sir, my good friend — I'll change *that* name with you."

HAMLET to HORATIO.



HE song says, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," — a most true saying. In fact, we all have friends whom we love because they are absent.

There is nothing else so attractive in friendship as the service it implies. If man or woman ministers to our substance or conceit, such a one is precious. We cool toward one whose help we no longer need — unless we are politic enough to look forward to contingencies, or weak enough to remember benefits.

Why think more tenderly of one who has been of use than of a glove which warmed our fingers, or a stick which braced our foothold in climbing? The glove may cover a tramp's hand next; the cane may rot by the wayside; and do we remember and sorrow for them? What we are, we are; what we have, we have; "cause, manner, means or instrument" (as the old Latin grammar has it) is nought. This is part of the philosophy of individualism.

It is proverbially easy to love them that love us, — do not even the publicans the same? This is true, up to the point of self-denial. That is a virtue one can't waste for a friend, — not often for one's self. Why, men are known who profess to love their families, and take credit to themselves for being good-natured in a pleasant home, and hug themselves as good husbands and fathers — as if that were any test. But to love one's friends, while they please us and don't ask too much of us, is still to be an individualist, — it is self-love extended. To be an altruist is quite another matter. Let us at least pretend to be altruists; it may be that if we pretend strenuously enough we shall actually become so, —

“Live for friendship, live for love,
For truth's and harmony's behoof.”

In school and play-days, with their constant association and long leisure, friendships (or so they seem) grow unconsciously into being, and are accepted facts, part of the portion which we take with us when we go out into the wider world. Most of these faint by the way, are lost in quicksands or thickets, or take the other road, and go so far off that all the post-office and telegraph facilities can't get a message to or from them.

We feel a pang when even the poorest of these depart; it was something that had its share, if only an accidental one, in moulding us; and he who owned it

with us, too, is somehow other than he would have been without such measure of mutual attachment as we had. Such an old playmate and classmate never quite loses hold upon us, and we always are interested to read of his going to Europe, or taking charge of a railroad, or being elected school superintendent; or hear of his marrying and wonder what his wife's like; or see in the newspaper "Born — a son to Mary and Didymus Best;" and finally, perhaps, in the same corner of the paper, another record that sends trooping back with him all the shadows of those early days, — till betwixt sigh and smile, we detect ourselves writing our own *Hic jacet* over the other's grave.

The friend of our inner heart, who grew into such intimacy that thought seemed twinned, aim one and faith eternal, — what is it when he fails us? Ah! that cannot be said. Which is the harder, — to sever in one sharp quarrel, or to watch the slow divorcing years eat away the dear communion, until on some dreary day one reaches out to his friend, and grasps a hollow mask — who can say? — for it is a matter of temperament. In the first shock of rupture there is an acuter pain, a sting of resentment that poisons memory, and a smothered hatred of one's self, as still matched with the other, — his co-murderer of friendship. Friends who part thus often bear to each other still a curious complementary relation; their unlikenesses develop the more strongly from lack of counter-

action, and one continues markedly to exceed where the other lacks, to recede where the other advances. This is not the sense, but a more romantic and emotional one, in which Coleridge wrote of the two barons : —

“ They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder ; —
A dreary sea now flows between ;
But neither heat nor frost nor thunder
Shall wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been.”

But the heart that suffers the long decay of a precious fellowship bears no lighter pains. It grows dull and heavy, flaccid and vapid ; he hears its voice more thin and hollow ; he feels its pulse ebb, its hand-grasp chill ; he sees it pale and shrink, — but hears and sees and feels as one who moves in a bad dream, which he is sure is a dream ; believing nothing, though he shudders all the while with the thought “ What if it be real, and not a dream ? ” Not till the very eyes glaze will he give up this treasure of his youth, so great a part of him, so great a part of that other ; how can it ever dissolve into thin air ? how can it be that there is anything true, worthy, lovely, trusty — if such a desertion is possible ?

The world changes some, so that what was is to them unvaluable — only “ yesterday when it is past, and as a watch of the night.” Its use has been served for such a one like a worn-out farm ; he has stripped its

hills of timber, its uplands of grain, its swales of hay, its orchards of fruit, its maples of their sweets; he is elsewhere, with new skies and new interests; its mountains may reclothe themselves with leafy coverts, its meadows toss with wavy wheat, its trees and vines blossom and bear, its maples yield their delicious essence of the spring, its bees and flowers share their summer lives, its birds carol,—all for others, of whom he has no jealousy. And such a farm is this friend, who is hurt and sore that the old times have gone out of his mind. The free soul, to whom the past is just the past, cannot comprehend this weakness that is vexed at the natural process which supplants the old by the new. To him the pain of the other is an irritating incident, for he himself is entirely satisfied that his old friend should subordinate him in like manner to fresh alliances and presently profitable acquaintances.

It is well to look upon both sides of such a division; not to cherish a blind regret and indulge a futile blame, nor yet to thrust all behind, and count the one who has gone out from us, and will be no longer of us, among those —

Whose memory is an unoped shrine
Wherein is put away
Each tender thought, each loving sign,
The spoken word, the written line, —
Past perfume of the dead woodbine
Where lingers none to-day.

We should remember that the friend is individual, or what would he have been to us? The nature be-


stowed upon him has other needs and reachings. And if fellowship has failed between you, is it not a failure on the part of both of you, and not for one only? Charlotte Brontë once said wisely that we must think not only of our friends' truth to us, but also of their truth to themselves. We are too apt to pivot all things on our own feelings, and feel that the globe is whirling from its orbit if our little sphere is shaken. As for the past, it is ours; whatever fails us now, it is not that. And for this new stranger — why, God-speed!

THE SOUL'S LONELINESS.



HOUGH all one's life should blossom thick
with joys,
And from the cloister of a guarded youth
Through honored years of fealty and truth
He pass to rest that naught of earth annoys ; —
Though the wise care a worthy sire employs,
The deathless tender of a mother's ruth,
The tie of kin, the faith of friends, — in sooth,
The love of wife, the trust of girls and boys, —
Bless him upon the way, yet shall he miss
Forever amid all companionship
Thoroughly to know another or be known.
For in each soul a solitude there is :
Though hand clasp hand, and lip delight in lip,
Within that precinct each must dwell alone.

THE LOVE THAT LASTS.

OW strange it is to hear a preacher say, “Duty, duty, duty,— I wish I never could hear it again!” and then go on to glorify Love. His must be a miserable conception of life, no matter what good he aims at or accomplishes. Love is good, and there is not too much of it in the world; it is constantly needed where it is not forthcoming, and religious people seem to have as little of it as any class. But this person’s notion of love seems to be of an extremely mystical nature. What love can take the place of duty? That is the vital mistake that men are repeatedly making in all the relations of life. They love their wives and children ardently, passionately, devotedly, — but do they govern their lives so that wife and child will be better, richer, nobler, sweeter, for their living? It is an easy thing to say “I love you;” but often the colder phrase “I will do my duty” would bring a greater comfort. Love is a sentiment, very real, very true, very strong, and inestimable; but duty is worth a hundred times as much, and alas! it is a hundred times harder!


Yet this view, though far safer for guidance than the other, rests, after all, upon a conception of love as insuf-

ficient if not as unworthy ; for it will be found that real love and duty are so much the same that to the true lover all his emotions are instinct with the sense of duty. Duty is only the thing that is due, and with the lover all that he is or has is due to the objects of his love. For him, as Arthur Hallam said, —

“ Duty is the being of the soul,
And in that form alone does freedom live.”

Young passion does not know of this paramount claim and eternal union, — resents it as impertinent ; and it is wonderful rather that love and duty take their joint possession of life so often, than that they clash through so many paired and disunited lives, or both depart and leave them desolate indeed. For though young passion be the purest, surest and sweetest spring in whose waters love can blend, that heavenly elixir does not always distil into its vivid currents. There are meaner cordials that counterfeit it for a while, but reveal their evanescent nature in the flavorless lees of the cup of life.

“LE DÉSIR.”

S south winds sigh for summer gone,
As flowers faint for falling dew,
So longs my loving heart for you, —
So longs, and dreams thereon.

Dreams, though the shadow of a doom
Darkens with death a lonely path,
Where love, with all the power it hath,
Fails, finding there no room.

No room for closely clasping hands,
None for the meeting of the lips,
No clinging heart to heart, — there slips
No gyve from Fate's iron bands.

Yet will I dream, for dreams are sweet ;
A respite from the depth of doubt
Within my visions seeks me out,
And weary moments fleet.


They fleet ; I flee in revery
To joy within th' unreal past
Too dear to lose, too sweet to last, —
Enshrined in memory.

Oh bid the future hours renew
In deeper love, in truer trust,
In hope unfettered, rapture just,
The bond 'twixt me and you !

I thrust the shadow back to death !
I love you ! Love is all of life —
Answer me so, and end the strife !
Your faith to mine — one breath.

One faith, one life, below, above !
Shall fear infuse a bitter leaven ?
I long for you as saints for heaven, —
I live for you, my love !

SUBLIMATIONS.

T is the fashion to speak of Thoreau as a man ignorant of the most intimate affections, — as if he were a recluse from lack of human engagement and devoid of the grace of tenderness. It is like the young Lowell's smart opinion of Bryant, —

“He has a true soul for field, river and wood in him,
And his heart, in the midst of brick walls, or where'er it is,
Glows, softens and thrills with the tenderest charities —
To you mortals that delve on this trade-ridden planet?
No, to old Berkshire's hills, with their limestone and granite.
You would break the last seal of its inwardest fountain
If you only could palm yourself off for a mountain.”

Thoreau cared for more than Walden Pond and “Ktaahdn,” or might have cared more. Let us listen to what he says about love : —


“It must be rare indeed that we meet with one to whom we are prepared to be quite ideally related, as she to us. We should have no reserve. We should give the whole of ourselves to that society, we should have no duty aside from that. One who could bear to be so wonderfully and beautifully related from day to day ! — I would take my friend out of herself and set her higher, infinitely higher, and there know her. . . . But commonly men are as much afraid of love as

of hate. They have lower engagements. They have near ends to serve. They have not imagination enough to be thus employed about a human being, but must be cooperating a barrel, forsooth! . . . The object of love expands and grows before us to eternity, until it includes all that is lovely, and we become all that can love."

The motto is Emerson's, — "Give all for love."

As a pendant to the sublime thoughts of Thoreau on love, let me quote these words, I know not from what writer, but they need no other warrant than their truth: "If you give yourself up to the influence of the feeling of love merely, you will have a real intoxication for a time, and that will be the end of it. You must understand that a feeling to last long must develop itself in the line of conduct. While you may not condemn the hilarity of disclosive feeling, you must understand that it cannot be long-lived unless it enters the judgment and fancy, and fills the whole moral being and the whole life, and works for the object loved in a thousand ways. Then it is immortal."

JULIET.

ULIET, Verona's fated maid and bride !
How lonely wert thou in the pass of life,
Desert of hope and with wild terrors rife,
Where with brave heart thou crowding fate defied !
Thy lover exiled, and thy father's curse
Upon thy head ; thy mother turned thy foe ;
And she who did thy sacred secret know
Empoisoning these sorrows with a worse, —
How strong thy passionate soul thy fate above !
To dare the potion and Death's dread abode,
That Romeo might win thee from its bars !
A flame thou lit that's quenchless as the stars,
And fervent down the ages still hath glowed
With deathless effluence while hearts shall love !

OPHELIA.



MAIDEN soul most rudely slain
Betwixt mad lover and vain sire ;
A heart that hid its vestal fire
Consuming with a holy pain ; —
Ophelia, was thy sweetness vain ? —
A loving gift of sacrifice,
An incense that to heaven flies
And sanctifies the murderous strain !

'T was the one touch with blessing fraught
In Hamlet's lofty tragedy ;
And when thy sensitive brain, distraught,
Gave echo of its dreadful thought,
Daisy and rue and rosemary
Thy virginal beauty's symbol wrought.

“LET THE FOREST JUDGE.”

You have said ; but whether wisely or no, let the forest judge.

As You Like It.



TOUCHSTONE'S test of the soundness of human wisdom was a severe one. Many of the opinions and judgments that seem creditable and pertinent enough among men, in the stir and cheat of common talk, take on quite another complexion when remembered on the mountain, or in the shade of a domed elm beside the river. That smart sneer at our neighbor develops a point at the other end, and wounds the speaker's conscience. That deprecating excuse for our unpractical friend does not appear so superiorly charitable as it did. Our truckling with convention, our indulgence of cant, our apology for enthusiasm, our shame of our finest feeling, — these fall away, and we know how servile, skulking, secret, — how ungenuine we are. The country is real, Nature is honest ; the inner man awakes and claims kindred with God. “Let the forest judge.”

There was much of this revelation in Shakespeare's forest of Arden, which we take to be no more in France than in Staffordshire, and which certainly cannot be reached by excursion trains or boats. There was almost

the spell abiding there that was in the Palace of Truth which Mr. Gilbert has written of so cleverly. The humbugs of the world of courts drop off; no imposition of rank or wealth here: it is character that keeps the duke of the forest leader still, and makes the shepherd Corin at ease with the noble damsels Rosalind and Celia. Here comes Oliver, to find what an arid, unnatural, hateful villain he has been growing; and here the jealous, uneasy usurper reaches the secret of content,—he thought it was pomp and power he wanted; he discovers it was only self-mastery.

Touchstone is a favorite among Shakespeare's wonderful fools. He is not a wild soul held captive, like a forest bird beating against its bars, as Lear's companion is. He is a snug, comfortable old fellow, who has tasted life with various relish, and knows all the weak points in humanity, so that he could let fly his bird-bolt with savage execution, if that were his humor. But he is kindly, and has that gentle notion of wit which Horace Mann is said to have expressed in the golden rule "No fun unless there is fun on both sides." Touchstone's vanity is to have lived at court, among people of culture; he had a fine temper in this respect,—not quite worthy of Boston. He does not confess that he was himself country-bred, but there is no manner of doubt he was. He has known all of serious Corin's way of life before; he is full of rustic comparisons, and speaks with warrant concerning the criticism of the forest, which he had tried on his own

behalf. His facility of verse is admirable; and how well he observes the ticklish failing of rhymesters,—
“When a man’s verse cannot be understood . . . it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room. Truly, I would the gods had made thee poetical!”

SUMMER THEFTS.



SUMMER ! dost thou mourn to die, —
To fade away
From gladsome earth and happy sky,
From starry night, from golden day ?

Was love not strong to hold thee fast, —
To keep thee mine, —
But thou must melt into the past,
While I entreat, while I repine ?

O rose-rich Summer ! stay and hear !
I loved thee so, —
Too well, — if thou hadst been less dear
Then might I smile, then bid thee go.

Were youth and love and hope my own
When June was new ? —
For now 't is sure I'm left alone,
Though skies were blue in August, too.

O Summer ! fain am I to mourn,
For thou away
The treasures of a life hast borne, —
And now 't is night for all my day !

AT THE FENCE CORNER.



IN these clear tempered days of early autumn there is a frank, welcoming aspect in the forest and the field that touches the most busy wayfarer, and makes him less anxious of his object in the town. At this corner of a Virginia fence, — where the red-headed sparrows chirp on the top rail and the red squirrel pauses a moment, flirts his pretty tail and flings himself up the chestnut tree, — where the summer golden-rods grow brown and the clematis is turning its flowers into coils, — where the great epeira weaves her strong and splendid web and the blue wasp has his recessed nest in the rotten wood, — where the cicada grates shrilly and the bloated black ants hasten on their tropical errands, — where the black cherry droops its heavily laden boughs and the robins and yellow-birds chatter at each other as they feast, — like jealous neighbors at a boundary hedge, each knowing that the other has rights, but feeling a strong suspicion that these rights are being exceeded, — where the sough of the western breeze in the near and hospitable pines seems to express the content and bravery of the season, — at this corner it is well to stop a little and survey the world.

For yonder, far off, ten or twenty miles, rest the blue hills. There is a wavering, breaking, thickening, dispersing, vanished smoke on their sides, — some one has set a fire, but it is too late for last year's leaves to spread it rapidly, too soon for this year's, and it adds a touch of grace to the still earth. Across the valley the church spires of pleasant hamlets gleam, like the hopes of human life, — always there to reassure when we lift our eyes to espy them. The fields now slumber ; the grasses of the meadows are long since hay in the barns ; the rowen grows slowly and delicately in rich and moist segments of the mead ; in the cornfields the blades dwarf and fall supine, the head sheds its pollen, and the silken tassels begin to brown ; the white convolvulus throws a grace about the bushy edges of the fields ; the pumpkins are mainly green as yet, but the leaves are abandoning their duty of shade ; the grape leaves also shrink and let the sun fall on the purpling globes.

From the corner of the Virginia fence one does not see all these things, any more than when one looks from a tower on a crowd he sees this one consult his watch, that one haul out his handkerchief ; here a man smoking a cigar, there a lady inhaling from her vinaigrette ; at one corner a starveling chap exhibiting a revolving toy for the children, at another a melancholy old woman with her nut and apple stand, and yet again a pitiful creature penned within two painted signs of some quack medicine. One does not see these things, but feels them ; and the difference between the shows

of Nature and man, of the country and the city, is most significant. The city does not cheer man, unless he be sophisticated and fortunate ; nor offer him at a glance the happy riches that dwell in outlook over a horizon full of farms and woods.

FOUR-LEAFED CLOVER.



THE air is freshening and wholesome in these premonitory days, when summer warms in the sun, but fall inspires the breeze. There are warm weeks between us and October, but they are not the exhausting weeks ; there are cool nights, chill dews at the dawn, and the morning-glories keep open till afternoon. There are even renewals of bird song, — not like the full harmony of June, when all the choir are here and happy, but still much delicious lyric outburst here and there. There is nothing sweeter in the whole year than the joyous warble of the yellow-bird as he alights on a ripe sunflower ; and the devout vesper of the hermit-thrush yet rises at dusk from the woodland recesses. The insect chorus ceases not now until the frosts come that loosen the chestnuts, and until the trees are glorious in royal raiment. The katydid is the genius of the early night, and with the mid-hour falls a deep and serious silence over earth. The mists lie on the borders of the streams, waver and rise a little, then sink to their parent waters. The apples are yet growing and enriching, the ferns ripen and their fronds fall, the berries of Jack-in-the-Pulpit redden. There are now many four-leaved clovers that spring up in the rowen and by the roadside. It is a good season for luck.

But let no one search for one of the magic stems. It were better never to have a four-leafed clover than to get it by diligent inspection of the field. Sarah Jewett is very wrong when she teaches the children to

“—— hunt the hay-field over
To find a four-leafed clover.”

That is not at all the way. No one finds good luck by hunting for it, or it were not luck at all. Luck comes unsought, and only those who have the gift to spy the charm as they pass by can wear the favor that it signifies. And what is that favor? Not a thing to be earned, Sarah Jewett, but a thing God gives,—the eye that loves the works of God, and whatever the drudgery of life may be, can leave it all behind and forget it utterly in the sacred joy of Nature.

LIGHT AND MIRAGE.




THE richest charms of the New England clime are passing in these fine September days ; the earth is full of ripeness, and the eye that is awake to beauty finds her possessed of a rare quality of surprise. The old scenes look stronger with character ; the trees have a fine, braced sturdiness and pride ; feeling that their discrownment is shortly to come, they will be the braver and gayer for it, and are already tricking themselves out here and there with a splendid bough. The glimpses of the rivers through the trees as one drives along the country roads are enchanting. They are the sky made liquid and near ; it seems as if a dip into the waters would be a celestial chrism. The light mirror balances the slender canoe with its mate, floating with equal serenity. The air sleeps on the water like a visible veil, and prolongs the reflections of the trees and buildings to exaggeration. The boat that you see in the distance seems lifted out of the water into air, and the oars to dip ether. A light mirage pursues the shores, and they partake of poesy. There is such a light in all the land and into the sky as Sanford Gifford loved to paint, and painted so well because he loved it, as he loved air and color, with an ardor too much for common eyes and souls to understand.

GOLDEN-ROD.



HE flags in the marsh, the brown sedge in the fields and the light fluffy wild grasses are elements of charm. The pokeweed is in its lush bloom ; and the elderberries, black and bowing down the bushes, are the type of thoughtless generosity. Above them the liberal chestnuts tower, holding their Ginevra-prisons tight for the destined clutch of frost. The birds have not much to say, though now and then one calls or cries ; the crow flies cawing overhead ; and the tiny sparrows begin to hold fence-rail conferences about departure. But most of all the golden-rod characterizes the season, so honest, generous, lavish, and withal most loyal. Nothing is better than the golden-rod to show what our New England fall is,—it bears the best mark ; the true work of a true soul can be no more outspoken than this glorious weed.

THE WOODSY AUTUMN AIR.

HE inexpressible charm of the season, though it contains all these beauties of growth, draws its life from the cool sweetness of the northern air, breathing its high peace and quiet through the deep, worshipful aisles of the woods, and bringing the moist fragrances of moss and fern, the balsams of the pine and hemlock, and the odors of commingled foliage of beech and oak, chestnut and hickory, and all the birches, — a graceful and liberal sisterhood. Now the forest gives freely of its precious scents, — the woodsy flavor of the autumn air, that comes from Nature's fond surrender of her gathered essences. Here, then, one feels that God dwells in the wild creation that even man cannot destroy, that is original and holy despite of human evil and mischief. It is within the country shades and fields, beside the gurgling brook, beside the bright, broad river, that one feels that there is a God who may be found at home. In the temples made with hands there is more doubt about his presence.

THE LYING DREAM.



THE red-gold moon is low in the lift,
Its double drifts in the rapid stream,
And the clouds that crowd across it so swift
Are shadows like the shapes of a dream.


The red-gold moon that drifts in the stream,
That will not farther, though fast it drift, —
It is my heart, that lies in a dream,
In a dream that is sweet as a dream is swift.

A dream does not move, though it seems to move ;
But it dies, as the moon in the waves will die,
Slowly withdrawn in the darkened groove
Where the grove reflects the edge of the sky.

A dream does no harm, O thou red-gold moon !
And what is it then but to turn back the years,
And to be from the start the honor and boon,
The blessing of hopes and the ending of fears ?

The red-gold moon, it sinks in the wood,
The trees with its level rays apart,
And the moon in the waters is gone for good ;
And the dream dies out of the dreamer's heart.

UNDER THE HARVEST-MOON.

HE beauty of September weather is like the beauty of the opal, now clear, now clouded, but in all its changes magical. For a while the soft air, the warm glow of sunsets, the generous glories of the harvest moon ; and then the warning of storm, the by-play of the elements, the fringes of a Gulf cyclone sweeping northeastward. September is to fall what April is to spring, the embodiment of gay caprice. Let us do devoir for the blessings she has brought ; for days sweet, sunny and pleasurable, and for the superior beauty of the nights. For the rising rays of the harvest moon have met the tremulous refraction of the setting sun and companied its fading light to the verge of earth, wedding night with day in mellow effluence. If farmers ever do reap and gather into barns beneath the harvest moon, there must have been gay times last week in the corn-fields, among the rustling stooks and the golden pumpkins. And such evenings, moreover, young Love loves ; Diana, that once, poets say, stooped to the Latmian hill to kiss Endymion, has the foible still to play the mischief with fresh hearts ; and what fond words may have passed in lazy boats upon the shadowy pond, or on the high hill-side, or beside the lingering gate, with all her

lambent benignity mirrored in soft eyes for "eyes that loved again," — how shall we dare to guess? — we to whom such sweet interludes of life are growing dim in fancy or in memory.

But even an ageing philosopher has some pleasures left beneath "the glimpses of the moon," — pleasures which deepen as the years advance; shared with the heart of Nature, the only mistress whose charms in very truth "age cannot wither nor custom stale." In the hours that follow midnight, when all has become silent in the town, and the solitary saunterer might be, for all that appears, in a city forsaken of life, the moon exercises its occult magic. The most familiar localities become strange, and he shall walk with eyes bent closely on his path, taking turnings wherever they offer, and never surveying the surroundings of his way, until he shall place himself in a foreign town; for all things shall have come under a spell. The architecture assumes strange aspects; an ungainly pile by a silver light here and an intense shade there becomes suddenly interesting and even noble, and it appears that the weirdness of Doré's nocturnal pictures is not all of the artist's eccentric genius, but is born of the night itself. For the moon lends mystery and dignity to vulgar brick and mortar, and imparts a vague ghostliness that makes the lonely saunterer half shudder with a sense of demoniac presences.

At the border of the river pause, gazing across its placid waters to the meadowed shores, and feeling the heart quiet and lapse into the natural beat of the

patient heart of earth. The solitude grows deeper, and becomes a thought —

“Whereof the silence aches upon the ear.”


The water slips by without a ripple, save where, far out, one hears sometimes a fish leap, and the surface stirs, and shakes the image of a star. The boats do not stir, their moorings are not fretted by the tossing of a rope, nor do the masts of the little sail-boats tremble even so much as a spear of faded June grass when a bee flies past. The elm above the saunterer's head feels for a moment a faint wave of air, which comes nowhence and goes nowhither. Over the river the trees seem low and vague, and on the level meadow rests a dense white fog, the height of a man, that sways and anon lifts for a moment, — then sinks again, waiting the morning breeze that shall bear it across and over the city. The water between has a deep, dark, steely burnish to the eye, and reflects the stars and the moon like a glass, while the narrow shadows of the banks are intense. The sky is glorious, and the sovereign moon dominates with the serene poise of accustomed majesty.

Saunter from this point of magic slowly into country roads, and note how portentous the ordinary hedge-rows of the wayside appear, and how forbidding the shadows of the woods. The thief, says the man in the play, espies in every bush an officer; but here though the most honest of men, one cannot help see strange figures lurking at the bend of the road or in the corner of the bridge. The cats, too, — what

are those old stories about witches' familiars? and what if one should happen upon some warlocks' congress in those shades! The owl, if one ventures into the forest in defiance of warlocks, makes the pulse jump with the clatter of his wings, unwarned from his watching tree, and a startled squirrel chippers reassuringly to his offspring. Sit here a moment, and the wood seems instinct and throbbing with life, and the moon, uncannily reaching down through the leafage, seems about to reveal the half-intimated secrets.

Out again, then, — for there are not many of us that care to lend an ear in the arcana of Nature, fearing perhaps lest the revelations might be unwelcome; and truly, like certain ancient religious mysteries, they require cleansed souls in their neophytes. The road will do for the average philosopher, as well as for the harvester or the whistling school-boy, neither of whom is abroad at this hour, nor indeed would it be well for their morrow's work. But there are signs of the harvester's presence on either hand. How acute in the night is the sense of smell! The heavy, nauseous odor of drying tobacco clogs the air far in advance, and far beyond, until the clean sweet fragrance of the late rowen gratefully counteracts it, or the rich bouquet of ripening grapes from vines unseen. Every hour of the moonlit mellow night liberates unsuspected faculties, and does more to put one into sympathy with the savage than all the days of the year in these same circumscribed localities. Yet what shall one do with the capacities of the savage in the city?

STURGEON-HUNTING AND BIRCH CANOES.

 HERE is a natural readiness in all of us to regard things foreign as inferior. We accept the presumption that ours is the superior race and civilization, and the customs of other nations are wont to present themselves to our attention as things which our example might much improve. Few in the United States, for instance, have a doubt that we are grades higher than the Chinese ; but this is a matter admitting of grave demur, and the evidence of facts, whereby it is likely to appear that we have no claim to anything better than an exchange, lacking where they abound, even if we excel where they come short. We once heard a good woman express her opinion that sturgeon slices, cured in the smoke of an Indian lodge, must be very nasty eating ; and yet her childhood was passed in an unplastered farmhouse, with strings of sliced pumpkin and quartered apples festooning the rafters, and absorbing the odors of the kitchen and "living room," in common with the balsamic smokes of the great fireplace, as generously as ever sturgeon drank in the atmosphere of a tepe.

The pursuit of the sturgeon is one of the characteristic phases of Indian life about the great lakes. There

dwell still in those regions considerable bodies of red men who do not grow civilized, in any proper sense of the word, and yet never trouble the country with "wars." One community of these, of the Chippeway and Menomonee tribes, used to inhabit Door County, Wisconsin, — the narrow peninsula which juts between Green Bay and Lake Michigan. This Door County takes its name from the strait above, between the rugged point and Detroit Island, known forever as *Porte des Morts*, the "door of the dead," because there occurred, hundreds of years ago, a tremendous canoe battle between two hostile Indian bands, in which it is said nearly a thousand red men were sent to watery graves. One of these parties was of the Chippeway race ; and the tradition is preserved among the peaceful modern remnants of the tribe, from one of whom the writer heard the tale. No one would expect any such desperate action of these red men, with the best opportunity presented. There were curious movements among them, however, at one time during the late civil war. They manifested an extraordinary penchant for war-clubs. The young braves were all the time bringing in knotty dwarf trees, trimming, stripping and polishing them, and making certainly weapons formidable enough to disturb the slumbers of the handfuls of white people who occupied the scattered fishing-stations. It was firmly believed that "British emissaries" were stirring up sedition, but there was no further evidence of it than this freak of taste. There was a hot "scrimmage" in their big tent, one Fourth

of July, but one white man stepped in, and every gun and pistol dropped with meek alacrity.

To return to sturgeon-hunting. Who knows anything about the birch-bark canoe? The readers of Cooper, who number some thousands less than they should, will remember that Chingachcook and Uncas and Leatherstocking — back to the time when he was Deerslayer, and knew the Hutter girls — were acquainted with it, and used to propel it like a dart over the waters. Nothing could be more inwrought with magic savagery than this fine invention of the red man. There it lies at the edge of the lake, a frame of tough saplings ; one for each “gunnel,” three or four bound with withes for the keel, others closely set as ribs from bow to stern, all covered with broad sheets of the bark of gray and yellow birch, sewed with sinew and pitched, like the ark, within and without, with resin of the fir, shaped like a fat pea-pod, and looking as if it could not upset. So thought I, sauntering, one summer day, on the border of Lake Michigan, and with vain nonchalance stepped into the middle of such a craft. I pulled myself out of the water with a greater respect for the savage than ever before. That morning I had seen a young Chippeway with a buckskin shirt and breeches, and a spear flourished above his head, run down the bank, leap into the canoe, drop his spear and catch up a paddle, and get half a mile out of the bay in no greater space of time. And there was a troop of little Chippeways, from five to twelve years

old, who played in and out of the canoe in idle days like flying fish or diving birds. The white man must understand that while reading and writing come by nature, managing a birch-bark canoe is a gift of God.

This, however, is not sturgeon-hunting, though nobody need think of that sport who has not achieved the mastery of the canoe. The sturgeon are hunted in the latter part of the spring, and until of late years, by the unspoiled red man, never with net or trap, or anything but the spear. The central lake falls, the Sault Ste. Marie (commonly spoken of with great rapidity as the "Sools'nmary"), present a stirring spectacle when a score or two of canoes, manned by from three to six Indians apiece, are engaged in the chase of the stout, swift sturgeon, monarch of the lakes. This is not like the tame labor of angling, or of hauling in nets; for the skill of the oarsman and the marksman are strained to a lively pitch, and when the canoes come in at night with their prey, it is with an air of victory. The loaded bark as she approaches her anchorage makes great leaps, unlike the swift smoothness of her morning race; and twenty yards from shore out flings a naked lad, and swims and runs through the shallow water and up the beach to the lodge. The next morning the squaws, little and big, are busy with knives, cutting the sturgeon into steaks and then into strips, and hanging them over slanting frames above a fire, to dry for winter provender; while the men are off again with their spears, and the little children are playing ball with the sturgeons' noses.

BUCKWHEAT BLOOM.



THE field on the hill-top is again in bloom ; for the buckwheat, though it seems only a few days since Colin harrowed in its seed, is now wellnigh its full growth, and begins to spread its corymbs and loosen the cloying fragrance from its florets. No other flower has so purely honeyed a scent ; it is the very atmosphere of a bee-hive, with a little more wildness, — such as enriches the hoard of the bumble-bee under some old log, when the bare-footed boy pokes it open on a hot day in blackberry time, despising stings for the luxurious tidbit. And so again the eternal exaction of Nature has been paid, life for life, the clover and the primrose and the grass for this grain, with its sweetness and brightness and promise of use. The bees are busier over the buckwheat than they ever were over the clover ; and presently, when the blossoming is at full, the whole field white and the air around sweeter than gales from Araby the Blest, they will be so numerous that their hum will sound like the wind among the pines, or like the confused murmur of tongues in a crowd before the orator rises to speak. What must have been the feelings of the first bee that re-discovered the flowery field, after it had so long been a sort of little Sahara to it ? One wonders if it would recognize the place, and remember the clover amid its richer feast.

THE BUMBLE-BEE.



HERE is no more delightful character to be met with in summer outings than this jovial knight of the road, the bumble-bee, — Sir Bombus, to properly dignify his Latin name. He is entirely disposed to give you free passage, for his designs are on flowers and fruits, which he rifles lustily, with a noisy delight ; but if you intercept him he is in arms without parley, and lets you know he will stand no nonsense. And there is no nonsense about him, — he means business in a fight, and certainly bears himself that the opposed may beware of him. Yet he is so strictly self-defensive that if you slay him you will never be able to escape the consciousness of wilful murder. You may lie in the clover with bumble-bees at every surrounding head, or pluck the mountain mint that buzzes with a score of them, and never one will touch you, on the sole condition that you respect their persons. But you must not take any liberties with them. You may not know the exact line whose over-stepping is a liberty, but it is plainly very strictly drawn by some bombian code of etiquette. It is a curious and somewhat contradictory manifestation of their character that often attends the storming of their nest and rape of their honey, spoken of above. Not

always, but often, they appear so bewildered by the outrage that they do not resent it upon the perpetrator, but skurry around confusedly, and finally all fly off as if to desert the scene of the spoliation. But they are sure to return again, and if possible reconstruct the ruin. There is something peculiarly free and flavorful about bombian honey, — which is the better to be enjoyed if the proprietors take the course just described.

Emerson, who sees more and better in a bit of Nature than almost all the rest of us, has immortalized the bumble-bee in his bright Olympian verses. It is to be regretted that he makes the crude mistake of common usage in calling the creature “humble” — which he is not in any marked degree; but in his own epithets how richly and justly and happily he dubs his hero: “Thou animated torrid zone,” “Insect-lover of the sun,” —

“Voyager of light and noon,
Epicurean of June!”

How he fills the whole human sense with the joy of the bee, till we fairly forget that it is not Sir Bombus who is humming his delights in our ears, but Mr. Emerson who interprets his “drowsy tone,” that

“ — tells of countless sunny hours,
Long days, and solid banks of flowers;
Of gulfs of sweetness without bound
In Indian wildernesses found;
Of Syrian peace, immortal leisure,
Firmest cheer and bird-like pleasure.”

IV.

HARVEST ACROSS LOTS

OF LIFE AND THOUGHT.



IV.


OCTOBER SWEETNESS.

DRAW deeply from the illimitable wells of air, in these days of ripe autumn that too swiftly pass, — days of sunny, cool sweetness, whose breath is a draught of vital cordial, the ethereal essence of the departing luxuriance of tree and flower and fruit, of the generous garnering of summer warmth and growth. In such days as these the sense of the earth's inherent life possesses me as perfectly as in the awakening spring. The mere aspects of Nature are those of abandoning life, — for the leaves are growing into floral glory, and here and there deserting the tree ; the grasses are in seed and clothing the pastures in dun sobriety ; the vetches lean their wine-brown straws in groups amid the dull field golden-rods ; the asters glorify the roadsides and the brush-heaps at the edges of the wood, and in the sweet serenity of forest lanes the latest of the golden-rods extends its gracile spray ; the reaped buckwheat fields redden the view with stubble, broken by small pyramids of bound grain ; the light-brown corn-stooks are set off by the pumpkin's yellow chrome

across weedy acres ; and indeed the surface of earth is never richer in color than now, while so prophetic of the end. The season is full of content, fit for rest. The happy fulness of achievement is its language, and its healthy message to our hearts. So in the rich, varied colors of the fields and the splendor of the forests we feel the signal of repose, and a benign influence steals over and transforms the human restfulness to acquiescence with the spirit of the autumn, with the coming trance of Nature, whose breathing wafts over —

“ Meadows drowned in happy sleep.”

FALL SUNSET.

 HE travelling telescope has been in our streets, aimed at the sun, and for a dime the children peep into that strange fire-fountain that the life of earth itself and all our lives depend upon. It is not much that such a glance tells one ; it only spoils the image of the sun that we know so well, although we never look at it until at its latest hour the shadow of earth tempers its ardor. Last evening it set in gorgeous royalty. The horizon all day showed a thickening gray haze, that lay upon the hills and seemed to depress them beneath its weight of foreboding storm. As the sun reached this indefinite cloud it began to purple, the tint spreading in rich, then soft, then exquisitely fine gradations of tint south and north, and the great orb himself grew golden and definitely round, a clear circle, that slowly dropped through the bank of color. The lines —

“ The level sun, like ruddy ore,
Lay sinking in the barren skies,”

came to me as I looked ; the skies were not barren, but “ day’s golden death ” was there, and little scraps of cloud detached themselves, floated upward, filled with flame, and vanished in the mellow, tender spaces of the


sky. All at once the sun was gone ; and radiating as it disappeared the arrowy light shot out in high-reaching darts of softened luminous haze, and all the air palpitated with soft waves, entrancing each sense to peace. Then the twilight gathered and descended like a comfort from heaven, and the earth breathed a harmony of rich content.

AFTERMATHS.

This is the burden of the heart,
The burden that it always bore :
We live to love, we meet to part,
And part to meet on earth no more ;
We clasp each other to the heart,
And part to meet on earth no more.

There is a time for tears to start,
For dews to fall and larks to soar :
The time for tears is when we part
To meet upon the earth no more ;
The time for tears is when we part
To meet on this wide earth — no more.

FORCEYTHE WILLSON.

S I read the kind things written about people after they are dead, I do not often quarrel with the kindness, but rather think it a tardy recognition of what was good in them, if they were not all good — as who is? The lives that must needs be condemned at their passing are many ; and whenever a bad influence departs, there should be no false mercy to gloss the fact. But many a man could only learn at his funeral that he had been thought well of through life, and that his early companions missed something of value when he was gone. We are afraid to be loving with our friends, lest we should seem weak ; and we are readily curt and rude with them because we count on

their love to forgive it. Tenderness is too soft a movement in the daily push of practical things. With the strangers that we daily meet we must defer and forbear ; for otherwise there would be no interchange of human service, but the whole day would be a skirmish of hate. It is not so difficult to be courteous to those we care nothing about ; but those who must endure our moods have the full measure of them. The dual rôle of the saint abroad and the devil at home is easy enough to play, and a company of stars could be put on the road at a moment's notice out of any neighborhood.

There are aftermaths in this harvest that are cruel to reap ; poison seeds have fallen in the daily cultivation, and spring up to sting and smart and pierce venom to the very life of the sower. These things are not what we would have sown, or thought we were sowing, but we do not wonder at the growth when its fiery juices rankle in our blood ; we must each cry *mea culpa* to the lonely, judging heavens, and confess there is no health in us. How easy would it have been to implant other germs, if we had known ! “The things you mean to say when they are gone, say before they go. The flowers you mean to send for their coffins, send to brighten and sweeten their homes before they leave you.” This we all know afterward ; yet, lo, these noxious herbs instead !

JEAN PAUL'S CONSOLATION.

IT is no longer so painful to me as it once was," says Jean Paul, the Only One, "that the hard cold hand of death struck you away so early from the honey dew of life, and that you have expanded your wings and disappeared. Oh, you have either a sounder sleep, or more friendly dreams, or a brighter waking than ours! But that which agonizes us in every grave-hillock is the thought, 'Ah, how much could I have loved thee, good heart, had I but known thy death beforehand!' But as not one of us can take the hand of the dead and say, 'Thou pale image, I have at least sweetened thy fleeting life; I never gave thy faded heart aught but pure love, pure joy,'—as we all, when at length time, sorrow and life's winter without love have beautified our hearts, must step with useless sighs up to the forms that lie overwhelmed by the earthfall of the grave, and say, 'Alas that I can no longer possess you and love you, now that I am better and gentler! Alas that the good bosom is now hollow and broken in, and no longer contains a heart which I would now love better and gladden more than before!'—what is left to us but a vain sorrow, a dumb repentance and unceasing bitter tears? No, my Christian, something better is left us, — a warmer, truer, more beautiful love toward every soul that we have not yet lost!"

A FRIEND IN PARADISE.



HE holy grace of Paradise
Upon thy fair low brow is shed ;
The airs that still in heaven rise
Breathe gently o'er thy lovely head ;
And thou with precious thoughts inspired,
With dear and delicate fervor fired,
Dost utter life while thou art dead.

Ah, that 's the word that buries love,
That ruins all the zest of life !
Death from his vantage flings the glove,
And vain is all the hope of strife.
Though to my heart thou livest still,
Though I thy presence feel at will,
Thou art in realms with joy arife.

Years over thee no shadow bring,
With deathless sweetness thou art clad ;
Thou over love dost fold thy wing,
And keep'st forever all that 's glad.
Ah, thou dost not forget ; by thee
The hearts that loved thee fervently
Are still beloved, though they be sad.

Sister, who in this autumn air

Wert wont to take such fine delight,
Who loved the flowers that flushed so fair

The face of earth ere frosts did blight,
I bid thee hail ! I say thee grace !

Listen from out thy heavenly place,
And answer in the moonlit night !

MID-FALL.



HERE is no country wood or field or road where the saunterer cannot find something holy, — worth his pilgrimage. How blind the average eye is to this ; how seldom does the dweller among beauty enjoy it ! Men live in the great mountains who could hardly reproduce their outlines in memory, though they can describe accurately enough the shape of a strip of pasture, particularly if there be a lawsuit about whether the boundary line should run six inches this way or that. We do not half look about us. This is what Thoreau meant when he said that he had tried to buy Conantum once, but failed for want of money. “ But I have farmed it in my own fashion every year since.”

This delicious season of mid-fall, when the good farmer of material products has gathered them into barns or is sending them off to market, and so closing his operations for the winter, is the very choice time for this superlative farming. The air is full of rich tonic, the woods and fields inviting. There is no need of melancholy in the fall. It is properly no more tragic to watch the fading of the verdure than to note

the melting of the snows. Nature is only disrobing for sleep ; healthful her deep slumbers are, and refreshing ; not like the gross drowsiness of the unending tropic summer. This season the green of trees and meadows delays to go, though the sumachs have been scarlet this long while, and almost all the fall flowers are going to seed, — the cardinal flower dropping its petals in the mountain brook, the fringed gentian lifting its dainty cup to the sky on sandy stretches, while the wild geese have been flying southward even for weeks.

The leaves drift over the meadows and lawns, and the weeds and grasses ripen and wither, but nothing of all the bloom and verdure that have faded and gone has been marred by eager frosts. The garden is almost as gay as July ; the portulaccas have not entirely ceased to open splendid carmine and orange cups through the mid-day hours ; the geraniums are profusely brilliant ; the white, fragrant alyssum grows thick and bright ; the morning-glories keep open now all day long, for the autumn sun caresses instead of scorches ; and the petunias, in all their variations and variegations, — milk-white, lavender, lilac, royal purple, — are fairly riotous in blossom and perfume. The monthly roses that edge the lawn are as delicately sweet and lavish as if it were June, and they have nothing of the forlornness that should dwell with the October rose. There is a peculiar delight in watching these lingering happy properties of Summer, warm with her fervent touch, as if she had just stepped out for an airing.

RIPENING AUTUMN.



THE autumn's ripening beauty is a revealment of color and light. The most inattentive eye is taken with the generous magnificence of woods and fields ; and on a wholesome, cool morning, — Nature being, one might say, like a matron busy but sweet-hearted, — even a dry man of affairs feels a stir of response, and is half surprised to find before some miraculous hill-side that he has not lost the power to admire. This is the real blossom season, to which the time of roses and pinks seems faded and dull. It is no more decay that paints the leaves than it is decay that flaunts in the tulip or blushes in the peony. They too are only leaves, the botanist tells us, developed for a special purpose, adorned with beauty in Nature's lavish way, to fall when their task is done. So with the tree that in sober green has met the shine and showers of summer, and now all at once blossoms to splendid death and sheds its ripened leaves.

All the forests are blossoming into glory ; not a day without its new character, its peculiar revelation of beauty. The trees each have a way of their own of assuming splendor, — one yields at a touch, and yellows or flames in a day ; another slowly adds tinge to tinge,

enriching continually, maintaining throughout a symmetric dignity, to its very last of life ; another darts out here or there a brilliant banner, while all its other boughs are complete green ; another still drops discouraged into dull brown, and rests so till the whistling winds of November. Every year the same sequence ; for the trees are individual, — each one has its peculiar marking, soon learned by its friends, who would know a fall leaf from it anywhere. This is true enough of the leaves in summer, if we but watched closely enough ; but a less observant eye is needed for the autumn color, and we know many a swamp maple and rock maple and red maple whose autumn complexion is as recognizable as any old friend's face.

THE SPELL OF DROPPING LEAVES.



THE mists that rise at night from the streams soften the slenderly attached stems, and the insidious gentleness of dilatory rain-storms pursues the treacherous work. There is a ceaseless, quiet, magical shadow-fall of leaves that are tired of life. In the depths of the forest, interrupted only by the skurry of a squirrel, the tap of a woodpecker or the rustle of some beetle or lizard in the mat of leaves, this leaf-fall touches the ear as a song in a dream, or as if the fairy tales were true and the footsteps of myriads of fantastic little beings, — the volatile essences of flowers and grasses and zephyrs, moonbeams, sunbeams and star-twinkles, — the ornaments and delights of the mystic border between our finer part and the soul of Nature, — were about to enter into communion with us. There are in the luxury of the free country many such mysterious charms as this ; and likest to it is the hum and heat of a day in a hay-field in July, when one plays indolence beneath a hedge-row against a stone-wall, and listens till the grave sweep of the scythes grows more distant, the whetting of dull blades on the other side the hill comes like swift staccatos of some peculiar music, and the buzz of bees and weaving

whirr of flies and dart of dragon-flies and all the multiplied sounds of insect revelry beside make a charm that Merlin could not wish to break, even though he were to be thereby

“——lost to life and use and name and fame.”

Such a spell does the soft and swift dropping of the leaves wreak above the forest ferns and mosses ; and when a chestnut, loosing from its opened burr, falls with a satisfied chut in its harborage of leaves, there to be sought for by squirrel or child, either of them alert and spriteful, — in the sweet grace of the tender, blue-hazed day, it recalls one to the world just enough to give him consciousness of the utter content that laps him round.

THE END OF THE GLORY.



HE fall now rapidly descends into that season of "wailing winds and naked woods" which preludes the winter snows. The fogs that have crept nightly from the river meadows up the hillsides, and folded the forests in moisture, have loosened the joints of the ripened leaves, and the faint rain of their dropping all through the nights has been a part of the inarticulate utterance of Nature. The querulous western winds have swept in buffeting gusts through the trees and hastened their dispossession, bearing "the gold of the ruined woodlands" in luminous showers to earth, there to rustle and hurry and heap themselves by the roadsides, along the forest edges, around the roots of the bushes in the meadow, or in the brook whose murmuring they smother as they clog its current. This is the end of the splendid pageant of the autumn hills, although there are many single trees as richly dyed as ever, and many that are still green. When the frost comes, these will be stripped also; and not much longer will last the peculiar wild flavor which pervades the forest air at this season,—the woody fragrance that is even more delicious than in the scent of spring.

A NEW MOON MISSED.



THE other evening, after many days and nights of cloud and storm, the moon shone out. A cold, dark rack stretched around the western edge of earth, pressing backward the sunset to other horizons. Above it there was not even a rag of misty white,—the north wind had beaten the vapors from before the face of heaven. And there in candid splendor, commanding all the illimitable vault, shone the moon. There mingled with the wondrous beauty of the spectacle an odd sense of surprise. I had been cheated out of the tender youth, the crescent elegance, of this orb ; I had seen this new moon over neither one shoulder nor the other, nor had I met it face to face. Whether I should have one sort of luck or the other, whether I should have a fall or get a gift, must now be left to the uncertain operations of human cause and effect.

HER DEATH-NIGHT.



THE moon lies wan above yon sinking cloud ;
The trees, their bare boughs still against the
sky,
Seem with a melancholy pain endowed
For loss of summer and the zephyr's sigh.
Why should this night oppress me, and recall
The pang that rent my heart long years ago,
When in a bleaker night of early fall
I wandered restless, for I well did know
A precious life was ebbing with the hours
And I my friend should see no more in life?
I cannot answer. On that night the powers
Of elemental Nature were at strife,
But through long rifts of cloud the setting moon
Broke coldly ; and the fatal day, — too soon !

NOT IN MAN'S TEMPLES.

IN one of the loveliest of the villages that nestle in the close vales of the western Massachusetts hill-country, there dwelt, some twenty-five years ago, a plain, quiet, unnoticeable man, a mechanic in a tool factory, who had the reputation of being an infidel. It was certain that he never was seen in the village churches, and spent his Sundays in heathenish wanderings on the hills. The line of moral repute was run very closely, even that little while ago, on that parallel. The young folks whose fathers and mothers went to church regarded him vaguely as a monster. The deacons compared him with that horrible creature, "Tom" Paine. He was known to have said that if Jesus should come to X—— he would n't go into the X—— church unless he had his scourge of small cords, — which was supposed to reflect upon the officials who brought in their baskets, the first Sunday of each month, the unleavened bread and the juice of the grape, to be consumed in remembrance of Him. He also had said that while he thought Deacon Splitleather would spoil the best day that the Lord ever made, he should have enjoyed the company of Jesus on the top of Moose Hill. But this man was not


at all a desperate character, when one came to know him. He loved every rock in the hills ; knew where the arbutus first dared to “take the winds of March with beauty ;” would sit and watch the swallows circle and dip, and the cloud shadows sweep up the mountain-sides ; or greet the sunrise from the huge boulder on the ledge high above the forests, or behold it set from the lonely precipice amid the darkling hemlocks, — with such a sweetness in his eyes and such a reverence in his silence that I in my boyish heart felt his sense of the immanent God, and was still in his great wordless joy.

COUNTERFEIT LIGHTNING.



FEW midnights ago, the wind being damp with hope of rain, and sobbing in the late oak leaves and the slumbrous firs, as I walked up the hill suddenly there was a quick yet soft light, or rather sense of light, above. Could it be lightning, — with a north wind and all winter behind it? Then there came another, and just then, surmounting the ascent, the wide valley spread before the sight, vague with shifting mists ; the sky star-studded, but with scudding clouds ; and from down the valley the noise of the rushing railway train came subdued to the ear. At the moment up sped to the very zenith a swift inverted cone of light, and then another, — it was the light from the engine-blast through the smoke-stack which had counterfeited the lightning of summer. There were yet no clouds above, — only dark masses and light rags of cloud skurrying below, — but the railway light showed that the air was charged with moisture ; and in these bright cones the drops shone like spray in the sunlight. From far down the river's course, even beyond the last visible point turned by the train, these marvellous shootings lit the rainy air ; and in less than three minutes the sky was covered with clouds and the rain fell like a July shower. It was a marvellous exhibition of the secret work of Nature.

INDIAN SUMMER.

HE Indian summer is not a common visitant, though the common speech, moving loosely, without much real observation of Nature, always gives the name to warm weeks in October, although these are almost as sure as the month itself. The true Indian summer never comes till the trees are bare, the ground frozen, all the summer birds gone, and the tit-mouse has made his morning call at the back-door. November knows this charm, the crown of the lingering year, the parting warm embrace of earth and sky, to be severed shortly by the high-piled pall of snow. If there is anything that mars this grace of benediction, it is in the feeble frame and mind of man ; for the elements are so sweet and indulgent that it requires all the ingratitude of humanity to anticipate winter. There is a strange peace upon the earth. There are asters and golden-rods, snowy yarrow and the ox-eye daisy, mostly springing from the base of the plants that have been cut by the haymakers or broken by the passing hand, but blossoming as cheerily as in their proper season. The bracing breezes, the bright and gorgeous coloring and the clear vision of October are gone ; but the mountains repose in comfort ; the

rivers sleep placidly in the softened light ; the brooks, brown with forest-leaves, are as quiet as they will be when the ice has fettered them. The prospect dims and sweetens too ; it is like catching the vague delicacy of her beauty through a lady's veil, — a charm that one would not change for definite sight, rich and desirable though that might be.

THE BEAUTIFUL STRANGER.



COULD not choose but gaze
And then thank God !

So goddess-like her figure was, so sure
The poise of her imperial head,
So firm and white her shapely throat, so pure
The calm, harmonious curves that fed
My eyes with rest and art's content secure :
Ingrate were I to gaze
And not thank God.

For beauty is His gift,
In flesh or stone :
Statue of Milo, that superbly glows,
The ideal woman sublimate, —
Or that supreme of Michael Angelo's,
The wondrous Night, who holds in state
The pregnant secret of divine repose, —
The seeing soul uplift
Toward His own !

So, stranger of to-day,
You serve me well :
Your temperate eyes, lit by a tranquil joy,
Beneath brows shaded by a past

Wherein life was not found a bauble toy,
Your tender mouth, whose full lips fast
Hold yet the kisses of your baby boy, —
O stranger of a day,
You serve me well !

Aye, beauty is of God
And speaks His praise.
The marble glory of the sculptor fills
The inspiration of His deed ;
The living woman from His grace distils
A grace whereon the soul doth feed ;
And each and all are but the tribute rills
Unto the stream of God
Which flows always.

MERRY CHRISTMAS !

IF life is a battle always, as the poets and the preachers say, how much more a battle is the winter, when the great enemy cold — for cold is death — reinforces the other malign influences. Perhaps this is the great test of the survival of the fittest in New England. The boys and girls enjoy it, — that is a comfort. The world is delightfully full of children ; they make it worth living in and working for. It gives a fresh touch and grace to the hour to meet a child on the street and have a pleasant talk with it, — what matter whether one knows the child's father or not? Thank Heaven, it is not necessary to be introduced to children before you can exchange a word of human kindness. The late festival morning I began the day with a fine resolve to wish everybody a "Merry Christmas." After home, it started with two bright little girls, who wished me in return so many Christmases that I felt "withered and grown old" at the very thought of so many, — but the little maids meant it kindly. Then there were some boys coasting, — rude little fellows enough, with patched coats, but they beamed like cherubs around a Holy Virgin and her Babe as they said, "Same to you, sir!" I tried it on

two or three grave old fellows on their way to the post-office, or elsewhere,— I cared not where, but they did, —and their acknowledgments were so cool that my Christmas spirit quite sank, and after the fourth or fifth experiment I had much the feeling of one who, to recall the utterance of a certain lyric personage, had committed a solecism which society could never pardon. The children were the only ones to talk Merry Christmas to — at any rate before dinner.

MYSTERY IN CHILDHOOD.



CHILDHOOD is sadly misunderstood ; we are not merely careless but actually forgetful of our own child-thoughts and longings, and so immersed in our present cares and fretful at interruptions that we do not have the patience and wisdom to find them renewed in the young souls given us to mould and make better than ourselves. Of some children the life is half spent in romance. Hartley Coleridge had his rival nations whose affairs he managed with all the earnestness of a statesman. I remember one marvellous boy who built around him an imaginary world as true to him as the one we call real. His "people" were friends to whom he confided many feelings but partially revealed even to his mother. They occupied the rooms in which the rest of us moved about with such dull ignorance of their presence ; and he would often shriek in anguish as some one sat down in a chair, crushing one of these friends of his, or would rush to rescue such a one from threatened extinction. The relation of the affairs of these curious people was his highest proof of confidence, and it was never given to his small human playmates. He was a strange epitome of the poet-nature, — the intense pleasure

and pain of the ideal, the spiritual, of which this was but one phase. No common, practical treatment was fit for such a creature as this, and the Puritan theology has no room for him in its scheme of the universe. Yet John Bunyan blossomed out of that theology.

HOME.



HE cloudy spirit of ill fate,
That bows the world beneath its frown,
Stops at the sacred household gate
And lays its hateful burden down.

Within the children laugh and romp,
The hum of happy talk is heard,
A comfort dearer far than pomp
Breathes in each look and in each word.

The fetters of the treadmill fall,
And for an hour the slave is free ;
His heart grows light, his soul in thrall
Alone to home and childhood's glee.

Upon the topmost step he halts
And through the lighted pane surveys
The mimic battle's gay assaults,
The mingled maze of little plays.

What is there in the strife of earth, —
Ah, what in all we get, he asks,
That after all is better worth
Than just home-coming after tasks ?

'Tis this for which the heavens rise,
The sun shines and the rains descend ;
For this the nations agonize
And laws are made and tyrants end.

The busy medley of the world,
Where myriads work and idlers roam,
In order ranged, in chaos whirled,
Exists — to make a human home.

THE CHILD'S SECRETS.



HE secretiveness of childhood is little understood ; that would probably be pronounced rather a trait of maturity, yet I doubt if plotter or confidant ever has a more religious secrecy than a thoughtful child. We are apt to think of children as fresh from Nature's unspoiled inspiration, and frank as the air or light, —not considering that they come of the far-stretching heritage of their kind, and must have derived concealment and privacy along with other tendencies from their parents. No child can have an unprejudiced temper and spirit ; and instead of wondering at the naughtinesses of them, fathers and mothers, knowing themselves, should thank God hourly that their children are better than they.

The child has secrets from everybody, certainly from its mates ; it has as much trouble to find a sympathetic fellow as its elders have. It was not every boy that snowballed and slid down hill with you to whom you could tell your speculations about the earth's turning around and yet our staying on when we are heels up. It is rarely that the girl is discovered who can really enter into the other girl's feelings about her doll that died because the sawdust blood ran out.

Nay, the germs of distrust and withdrawal into self may be observed in the very cradle, where the mewling infant rejects sturdily the food from one hand that it accepts eagerly from another, and smiles at the impossible language of a woman, when much more impossible language from a man's moustache is scornfully and noisily rejected. Even in the elementary "goo-goo" there is, one sees, room for sympathy to show.

We that have grown up are constantly showing the errors of children, — petulant, passionate, sulky, careless, destructive, disproportionately valuing little things and large, hurting most those we love most, paining ourselves more irremediably than all, and going counter to our own desires from mere cantankerousness. We are a mirror of our past petty selves, and yet how little we realize this as we see the child grieve and disobey and defy! What! do we treat children so, and shall we rebel at the thought that we have less than our deserts of kindness?

WHAT MORE?




HY, little boy, why do you laugh?
As if a bubbling spring
Leaping in joy along the path
Withìn you fain would sing !

Your lips the laughing water sipped
And parted in a smile ;
The rippled sunlight upward slipped
And lit your eyes the while.

Too swiftly sped the glowing ray ;
In pain each dainty sphere
Closed light its lids upon the day,
And 'neath them stole a tear.

And this is why you laugh and cry ;
Your spring we all have tried :
A smile and tear, a kiss and sigh —
How little else beside !

THE CHILD'S FEARS.

 CHILD often suffers unconscionably from our lack of insight into his or her little fears or dislikes. Can't you remember, sir, how to gain the praise of your father for a brave boy, you went up the back stairs to bed in the dark, with the attic door, or perhaps two attic doors, opening into your room, and you dared not pile the washstand and chairs against them because you knew your father would call you in the morning—even if he didn't look in on his way to bed—and see that you were not really brave at all? For you never, when once you got to sleep, could wake up early enough in the morning to get the obstructions down. And how many nights have you not lain awake, listening till the air was alive with noises, and you did not dare even to bury your face in the bedclothes, fear having haled you quite beyond that resource of the first timidity, and made it worse to dread the seizure of an unseen hand than the opposition of a legion of evils face to face? And did you ever confide these fears to any one, child or man, or even to your mother?

I remember a wide field on the sand plains, bordered on three sides by pine woods, and on the fourth by a

scrubby hedge, beyond which rose a low range of hills. Thither in the hot July days a boy of nine and girl of seven used to go for wild strawberries from their cottage, perhaps half a mile away. The road was little travelled and very "heavy," and how their little legs ached in the sandy ruts ! That was nothing to complain of, to be sure ; but presently they had to pass a rough house standing at the edge of the woods. The inmates were not gentle, and they had a dog that terrified the children as he rushed out, barking and showing white teeth at them. He seemed to magnify terribly, and even to multiply, as those dreadful teeth came nearer. This Cerberus once passed, the road was easy to the strawberry lot, and the berries were plenty ; yet for some reason few gatherers visited it, and the children picked there in a true desolation. Perhaps neither owned to the other any fear, but each felt that there was something wrong about that lot. The distant dinner-horn, heard from beyond the hedge, seemed like a sound from a world that had deserted them. They knew the men in the field over the hedge dropped their hoes and turned to where the horn was blown and dinner waited, — and left them, poor chicks ! more alone than ever. One day they ventured into the dark precincts of the pine wood farthest from their by-way of exit. They came upon a scattering lot of bones, — it never occurred to them that these bones could be anything else than human. A little farther they found, mouldering in the dead leaves of bygone years, an old vest and overalls. They shuddered and

screamed a little, I think, and then ran to the middle of the hot field, and sat down to shiver and wonder and invent a dozen tales of terror. And yet they never spoke of it at home, and continued to pick berries there in fear and trembling.

CHILDHOOD'S METAPHYSICS.



THE metaphysics of childhood prove that the ingenious philosophers who invent theories of the mind and the soul and the body have a natural basis, — that their cloudy houses are not wholly fabrications, but in part the result of natural movements, such as in the obvious and mysterious physical world produce its phenomena. A five-year-old boy one summer day broke out from a period of silence with : —

“ Papa, do you know I ’ve got a brother ? ”

“ No — have you ? ”

“ Yes, and he is a naughty fellow ; he cuts trees, and pulls off apple-blossoms, and steps on plants and won’t eat his breakfast ! ”

“ Indeed ! and what is this naughty fellow’s name, and where do you keep him ? ”

“ Oh, his name is Chunkin ; and I keep him in the strawberry room, when I can. ”

This “ strawberry room ” was a cool north room, kept dark, in which fruits and other food were kept in hot weather. Placing the mythical “ Chunkin ” in this room was plainly a device to account for the father’s never seeing him. The boy proceeded, after a moment, —

“He does n't know anything ; he throws away the good strawberries and keeps the bad ones, — he does n't know what *is* good, at all.” And after a little thinking, he added : “Chunkin is a good deal older than me — ten, fifteen years old.”

Not to pursue this knee-breeched philosopher's account further, notice the care with which the fiction had been wrought out. His “Chunkin” was plainly an impersonation of his own naughtiness, carried to a really painful degree ; no grown creature could have a keener sense of the enormity of “not knowing what *is* good ;” and his sense of the power of the bad within him was remarkably expressed in making “Chunkin” so much his elder and of course his beguiler. It was a subtle plea for condonation.

ITS NATURAL PHILOSOPHY.



THE natural philosophy of children is very interesting ; they invent just such theories of the universe as the wild nations have, with a sweet unconsciousness that they are originating myths. During a tremendous thunder-storm a little fellow of four years old was overheard explaining to another child that the lightning was just "red water that runs out of the clouds," and the thunder "the noise it makes when it goes into the ground." He lost his courage concerning thunder in another shower, and afterward had to be comforted a little when one occurred. One evening, to calm his apprehensions, his father assured him that the lightning he saw was a great way off, and told him that if it were near, he could hear the thunder at once after the flash, but this time he could notice that there was quite a while between the two. The boy mused over this a little, and then queried : "Papa, what makes the lightning speak so long after it's got through?" — a question which might be asked of many a public speaker.

HE WANTED WINGS.



THE other day one was explaining to two children the notion of metempsychosis. How excellently Shakespeare redeems the fooled Malvolio in our estimation by his part in that conversation with the pseudo Sir Topas ! his answers being so seriously good, to wit : —

Clown. What is the opinion of Pythagoras concerning wild fowl ?


Malvolio. That the soul of our grandam might haply inhabit a bird.

Clown. What thinkest thou of his opinion ?

Malvolio. I think nobly of the soul, and no way approve his opinion.

Well, the doctrine being set forth, the children had their preferences. Said the girl of nine, "I'd much rather be a bird than a cat or a dog. What would you rather be?" The boy of four and a half, his eyes all alight, answered with sparkling readiness, "I'd rather be as I am, and have wings!" The old instinct, the deathless desire ! Will it ever be satisfied with a flying-machine ? Do you really think it will, Poet Stedman ?

MAN'S DISOBEDIENCE.

S there anything else so strange in human nature as the disobedience that is its rooted habit?

What the child does, in its feeble essays in petty things, is what the man does in matters that touch the fountains of life. We talk about the teachings of experience, but how rare their effect is, — reaching not even the limits of the physical ; for although the scalded dog dreads cold water, the man, fresh from the hateful remembrance of one evil venture, repeats it as if there were no statute of Nature against the folly. In the narrow path of life there are the noblest outlooks into infinite beauty, and the airs of immortality are always blowing on the heights where the spirit lives ; yet how we drag that wondrous essence down to baser regions, where it sinks in coma, and suffers oblivion until some reacting grace frees it again. We learn everything that is wise in theory, and know without question that good and beauty are the same, that truth and joy are spiritual synonymes. These things also we prove in practice, as much in disregarding as in obeying the great positive precepts. Is it not then most strange that men should derogate from their high estate as children of God, and go on in unworthy courses, saying that God will not


regard it, when day by day witnesses that all the forces of Nature are bent to note and visit error? Says Socrates: "O youth! who thinkest thyself to be unheeded by the gods, art thou even so small as to sink into the depths of the earth, or so high as to fly up to heaven, thou shalt still pay the fitting penalty which they will exact."

THE REAL END.



HERE is nothing more desperate in experience than the fading of the personal human hope of happy life. When something is taken out of one's living that has been inwrought with his being, that he has measured life and known its pain or profit by, there ensues a strange and incompen-sable vacancy. In some way the gap gets bridged as the remorseless step of time treads down feeling and memory, but the one sense of reality cannot return. Life, in a profound sense, must become suspension, and whatever intervenes with death a stop-gap, since the real inner self is whelmed in what was, and never can attain what succeeds and is. Whatever exists, there is nothing that ever can be so real as that which does not exist "whilst this muddy vesture of decay doth grossly close us in."

FAILURE.

E broods in darkness on a life
Which might have been so high a gift
That in the stress of evil strife
Its atmosphere had served as shrift.

It had so much ; its wealth was poured
With lavish current, as the skies
Pour forth the light of orbs unscored
In floods whose motion never dies.

The earth was his in all the charms
Of lifting hill, of lovely vale,
Of mighty forests in whose arms
The wild birds breed their nestlings frail ;

Of flowers that sweeten and beguile
The rudeness of the rocky ledge,
Of storms that rage and suns that smile,
Of brooks that murmur in their sedge.

The world was his in habitude ;
He knew its honors and delights,
Its fellowship, its solitude,
Its crowded days, its splendid nights.

And man was his, to fire his soul
With high ambition, and to swell
The pulses that with passion roll,
The dread inharmonies of hell ;

Or, as he would, to raise aloft
With soaring aspiration strong,
Or wake emotions light and soft
With tender purity of song.

Yea, all was his, save one sole thing, —
One thing, the heart of all that was ;
When that he sought it straight took wing,
And all his melody must pause.

For lack of that his lyre fell mute,
His heart grew dry as desert sand,
His eyes with misery acute
Saw nought but horror in the land.

The earth lay doomed and beautifulless,
The birds sang false, the blossoms died ;
Man grew a traitor to distress,
And woman's gracious tears were dried.

What shall revive his former fires,
And what bestow the lacking one ?
For heaven holds nothing he desires,
And hell no torment he would shun.

MASQUERADE.

FEW spiritual moods are more dangerous than that in which he falls who lives in the superficial estimation of his fellows, who cannot know him except in such measure as his letters reveal. He to them may be a paragon of virtue, a model of judgment, a glory of humanity ; while he best knows how far he lacks of all. It often happens that in this juncture the poor creature elects to play the perfect rôle he is but thinly fitted for ; and then what posturing agonies, what frets, what distortions, will he undergo ! When all 's over, and the masquer found out, how much better if he had been silent — and himself !

But a worse thing is to nourish the soul with the praise of others for some beauty or value outwardly shown, until one grows, buds, blooms, even fruits in complacent glory ; drinking in the flattering incense of honest feeling without a question of due or overdue. To this state rightly succeeds a sharp awakening, — a shock, perhaps, that flings the soul out of its indulgent ease to the other verge of self-hate, showing how mean, false, trivial, evil, his cherished position was ; how unregardful and unworthy he himself of the friendship and trust and sweet affection that have been given him.


THE PRICE.



SOUL that strivest with thy bounds,
And for thy fetters would have wings, —
That from thy house of bondage sings
The song that tells of hidden wounds, —
Why wilt thou vex the trembling strings
Of thy light lyre with dreadful things
To which the cope of heaven resounds?

It is not meet for thee to voice
Thy impotent longings to the skies,
And vaunt thy feeble sacrifice
As if thy fate had been thy choice.
Thy duty deep in silence lies :
Thou hadst thy will, thou payst the price ;
Thou mayst remember, not rejoice.

THE FIGHT FOR THE STANDARD.

 IN the days before the chromo, when Mexican battles and Yankee barnyards rivalled each other on the rural walls in high-colored lithographs, costing anywhere from ten cents to a quarter apiece, there was one general favorite, entitled "The Fight for the Standard." Two gorgeously uniformed riders met in deadly shock, their horses rearing and foaming; one cavalier falling with the blow of his antagonist's sabre, yet holding the flag high in his left hand while his right transfixed the other's breast, — all this amid the lurid clouds of battle and the bursting of shells; rage and glory haloing both faces, and splendid terror the spirit of the scene. This was perhaps after some French original, — it was in that style; it lingers occasionally in back-rooms even now; it is quite the heroic ideal.


Shortly after the civil war had ended, a young rustic in army blue, with a musket, stopped on his homeward way at our house. That faded dingy blue was the most interesting color in the world then, and the veriest ne'er-do-well in the village that wore it was a hero; and as this soldier, scarcely more than a boy, ate his dinner, we felt grateful to him. He had a simple, narrow mind, which all his experiences of camp and

field had not deeply impressed. Presently he said he 'd got somethin' he didn't know but we 'd like to see, and pulled out of a breast-pocket a leather case, which he opened, disclosing a large bronze medal. We read the inscription : it was to the effect that the Congress of the United States presented this medal to Corporal — for bravery in the field. Then of course he had to tell us the story, something after this fashion, —

“Wal, ye see 'twas down ter the Peninselar, one of them days when we did n't seem to be doin' nothing 'twuz any use. We was 'most way up the side 'f a hill, an' ez quiet as a graveyard ; but sometimes if a feller on'y showed his head over the top, he see and heared enough, I tell ye. I kep' creepin' up and lookin' down, and I see a lot of rebs 't wan't doin' any more 'n we ; and a big feller in the middle, he stood kind o' careless and sassy, holdin' a han'some flag. I told the feller next me, sez I, 'I snum ! I 'm goin' to get that flag !' He sez, 'Don't you be a darned fool !' But I jest dropped my gun and run down hill — I tell ye, 'twuz a sight further 'n I s'posed down to that field — 'n I was right inter 'em 'fore they seemed to notice it, 'n I run right up to the big feller an' says, 'Here, you, give me that flag !' 'n he jest let go, 'n I *put* it, — I tell ye I did n't wait to say 'Thankee' ner anythin' ; 'n if the bullets did n't sing 'round my way fer a while ! But they did n't take no sort of aim, 'n I got up to the boys all right. I tell ye, that big feller must have felt kinder silly when he thought on 't !”

And this was the real “fight for the standard.”

WINTER SPIRIT.

 HE old year goes out valiantly, clad in full arctic panoply, and leaving the earth in perfect winter beauty, as notable and far finer than that of deep summer or of the changing autumn. The tints of a winter landscape are drawn from a more restricted palette than those of the sister seasons ; but they have a singular exquisiteness of harmony, and for light and shade a delicate and vanishing gradation that tries the artist's skill to catch on his canvas. It is not a sombre landscape, though that is the general notion. Even under the dull and brooding heaviness of gray clouds, there is a shining freshness in the snows, and not more melancholy over earth than on cloudy days when hills and plains are green and streams unfettered. And when the sun through the crystalline air beams on the sparkling mirror of the snow, and borders the horizon with an amber light that blends imperceptibly into the blue ether, — when the trees reveal their wonderful tracery, and the forests and hills shade in purple and violet and lavender of indescribable delicacy, — the effect is unrivalled for bright and cheerful beauty.

In truth, our New England winter, when it is berated as gloomy, bitter and imprisoning, suffers an injustice

it is the fashion to bestow with entire impartiality upon all the Yankee year. Uncertain and capricious our weather is, but its caprices are as often charms as frowns. We should be grateful for the ample scope, the catholic variety, of our year. In this favored latitude we share winter with Labrador and summer with Florida, and taste all the climates between in their choicest and clearest qualities. Best of all is our keen, forceful winter, Yankee all over, and doing a great work in building up the real Yankee character, with its enterprise, readiness and grit. How exhilarating are the mornings full of tonic frost, free, healthy western winds, splendid abundance of sunshine ! How marvellous the moonlight nights, made for poets and lovers and young folks' sleigh-rides, over well-pathed roads between fields of snow, that fill the ideal of wintry perfection ! The brain leaps with the heart ; and man in every fibre of his stirred frame renews youth and spirit, and looks with hope and courage, born of the air and season, into the days to come !

THE GLOAMING.

SUGGESTED BY A PAINTING BY T. L. SMITH.



HE plain is drear with cruel snow,
And drear the cruel gale ;
Yon forest wraps my hungry view,
Night hastens to enwrap it too, —
My path 's beset with woe,
And malice rides the gale !

How crowd the clouds upon the earth
Before the evil blast !
How lurid frown their tints of fire
Flung from the sun's departing ire
Upon their inky dearth, —
The devil's in the blast !

Ah, Rollo ! crouchest at my feet ?
Thou likest not this wind.
Would we were home before the grate
Snoozing, — nor thus had tempted Fate !
But Fate we go to meet, —
Brave Rollo ! — Bless this wind !

How wicked is this winter night !
God save my sinful soul !
The glow the dying sunset shed
Is like the last look of the dead
Before the soul took flight ! —
God save my sinful soul !

MORNING IN THE SLUMS.



NE gray morning, landing in the great city before even a stall in Fulton Market was open for early coffee and oysters, the fancy seized the Saunterer to wander into the more desperate quarters of poverty and crime. These people had to be astir ; and I saw the dull lights of breakfast-getting, mere pin-points of shining, up the dark heights of the blind alleys. A blowsy woman, with her gown pinned together at the neck, was coming from a sort of postern-gate with a brown broken-nosed pitcher without a handle, — the beer and gin shops were open, of course ; they do not keep so good hours as temperance folks do. A performing bear was coming down the street, led by a chain in the hands of a brown Canadian who held also an iron-pointed goad. There were a dozen children, some hardly clothed, that followed after, and a few men and women came to the doors. They looked with some wonder at me, but said nothing. It was very miserable, — everything, streets, houses, people, — but it did not seem at all dangerous.

THE CHURCH OF THE POOR.




LITTLE farther on, in the very heart of the slums, stands a plain stone building, with an iron fence in front ; but the gates of it are open all day, — and all night, it may be, for aught I know. At all events, they were open now ; and there were a few men in grimy overalls and women in faded and frayed shawls entering them, and through the grained doors, worn black in irregular patches where the hands of hundreds, from childhood to full stature, had pushed them open. Inside there was the altar, with its few poor candles, the tawdry image of the Virgin in its shrine, with more poor candles ; the priest bowing and kneeling and intoning ; the acolytes swinging incense at the tinkle of a bell ; and then the solemn elevation of the Host. The adoration of this congregation of hard-working and little-earning hundreds was wonderfully impressive. The odors of the incense could not cover the sickening emanation of unclean homes, and there was no more show about the church than about the worshippers, — even the stations of the cross were wretched colored woodcuts, — but never in a cathedral all ablaze with gas, with altar prisms flashing out

the light of scores of candles, has the Roman Catholic Church worn for me so august and sacred an aspect.


It was a principal evidence of the mission of Jesus that "unto the poor the gospel is preached." This has since been largely forgotten, — but the Church of Rome does not forget it.

POOR CHILDREN AT PLAY.

T is a curious surprise to discover a group of children of the city poor engaged in actual play. Looking up those dismal culs-de-sac, with their crossing clothes-lines, story above story with no ray of sunshine, — knowing how they live there like pigs in the sty, with nothing humane and comfortable about them, — it seems impossible that even the instinct of amusement should remain. Once as I was passing through the lower streets of New York, where sailors' lodging-houses, saloons, pawn-shops and other traps and hives of the poor fill the whole surrounding, until one sickens at the sights and smells, I came at the crossing of two streets upon a score or so of youngsters playing. There was very little community in their pleasure, — no "hide-and-seek," or "tag," or "snap-the-whip," — but sometimes there were two or three together. Here a girl and boy, ragged, but not so very ragged, had each an iron barrel-hoop, and were rolling them in the provoking parabolic curves that distinguish the barrel-hoop because of the slant of the barrel; and it compelled a smile to see how the girl had tied little bits of ribbon on her rusty iron, — decorative art being plainly as natural in the gutters as among the finest

Fifth Avenue promenaders. In a corner between an ash-barrel and an upturned hand-cart, a tall girl, perhaps ten years old, very pale and clean, was skipping rope. Here a knee-high boy, full of glee, was tossing a potato back and forth with a red-headed girl at a basement window. Two small chaps had a great treasure, a pair of skates, which they had divided ; one had a skate on the right foot, another had one on the left, and they were making believe brilliantly in the frozen gutters. The one who had the curbstone to steady himself by with the disengaged foot was the better off, but the other seemed to have a good time too. And one solitary girl-baby of four years or so had made herself a slide some five feet long on the smooth iron border of a grating, and would run and slide and slip down and shriek as merrily as if there were no poverty. I feared to see a policeman interfere with these trespassing occupants of the highway, but none did ; and all the passers-by seemed pleased to see them.

BY HOMELY HAUNTS.

Y homely haunts he oft would stray
Where children swarmed around the door ;
More earnest than his work their play,
And than his work he thought it more.

For in his mind there brooded deep
The sense of wasted force and fire,
Of waking worth far less than sleep,
Of sullen embers that expire.

To him all that he wrought upon
Was drear with failure, dulled with lack ;
His purposed meaning never won,
His chosen path still turning back ;

The old fields paced to find a straw,
The old mines delved to get a stone,
The jewel found despoiled by flaw,
The comrade lost, the songster flown.

And thus the youngsters in their sport,
Eager to win each mimic fray,
Waging their utmost skill to court
The coy success that fills their day, —

Rebuked his hollow circumstance,
Reproached his soul's unfruitful time, —
The puppet of a mocking dance,
The tuner of a shallow rhyme.

He would be much, yet such a spell
Enwraps his limbs he can but move
Within the limits of a cell,
Within the order of a groove.

Yet if he were the careless boy
Whose game of marbles is enough,
How thin and vacant were his joy,
How all his fine were turned to rough !

Better to feel the lift of soul
That drinks the glories of the earth,
Better to seek the noble goal
That gives to emulation worth,

Than in the comfort of the hour
To sink the heart, depress the eye,
And seize the petty moment's flower,
Because the nobler fruit grows high.



V.

THE JOURNEY

HERE AND HEREAFTER.



V.

THE JANUARY THAW.

IT is curious to note how in all things, great or trivial, man's unsatisfied, unresting, on-looking disposition manifests itself. In the fixed repetition of the seasons he has no feeling of repose for more than an ephemeral day. There is no impression of continuance. April has scarcely awakened the tremulous anemones when a breath of June strays in on the vanishing snow-drifts, and straightway we anticipate the roses. In the midmost fervors of summer there comes a gray storm, or a scarlet pennant flung out by a lone swamp-maple greets the eye, or the ear catches a melancholy minor twang from some dubious cicada, — and the freshness seems to fade from the verdure and the scent of autumn invades the air. The waning months that follow are filled with prophecies of winter, and the only season in this rude climate that we definitely resign ourselves to is that of snow and ice and bitter winds from arctic fields. It lasts long, this unhoping endurance of winter; but it

in turn dissolves with that traditional occurrence, the January thaw.

This is an event in which no well-brought-up New-Englander will for a moment abandon faith. The first day on which the eaves drip is regarded as premonitory ; and when the sun insinuates that one would be more comfortable without an overcoat, — when the sky drops a few degrees nearer, and a palpitating haze veils its blue with buff at the horizon and where the tree-tops seem to touch it, — when the snow disappears from southern slopes, and the long-hidden banks steam with moist warmth, — when the sleigh-paths are splashy, — when the hens grow conversational and indulge in excursions up the road, with such important air of exploration as if they had been commissioned from some Noah's ark, — when the cows in the barnyard low with their muzzles high in the air, as if they thought of the pasture, — when these and a hundred other signs coincide, the Yankee farmer agrees with his neighbor that the back of the winter is broken. Half January and all February with its deep and bitter rigors may be before him, besides a stormy March with aggravating roads ; for all that he feels an unshakable faith in those dislocated vertebræ, and the fiercest northwester he greets with no worse growl than " Holds on stiff, don't it? But there ain't many more on 'em ; the old backbone 's broke, a fortn't ago."

The man of science occupies himself largely with shredding away our popular superstitions ; and " Old Probabilities " — they will go on calling him so — be-

gins to make inroads on the wisdom of the back-country, where folks grow up with the sky and the earth, and are intimate with the moon, the clouds and the winds, the trees and the living creatures of God, — never the less intimate because so ignorant of the laws that science has formulated to explain their nature and phenomena. They divine, — these old-fashioned Yankee farmers on the free hills, — like the priests of old days, from the flights of birds, the dip of the new moon, the substance of egg-shells, the spleen of the hog or the swelling of the alder-buds. Their divinations are not a matter of doubt, off the line of the railroad, however the village sceptics and the superior city wits may flout them. The signal-service reports are received “with a grain” in those simple regions of elder wisdom, and the “indications” are compared with the dictum of the oldest inhabitant, if he be near, or the oracle of the Centre or the Corners. And it is not yet that the equinoctial and the January thaw can be pronounced obsolete.

WITHIN A YEAR.

ANNIVERSARY OF SAMUEL BOWLES'S DEATH.



WITHIN a year what life and growth may hap !

Within a year what ruin brood and spoil !

And who until th' event, with whatso toil,

Can count his harvest safe, nor overlap

His fears upon the future, day by day ?

But thou — for I recall thee, vanished chief ! —

Didst never doubt ; while every grain-full sheaf,

The guerdon of thy work, was borne away

Unto the threshers, wrought to needed food,

Or seeding all the land with newer grains,


Forever to fulfil thy sacred pains.

Thus are we aids as well as heirs in good ;

To serve the earth as thou through suns and rains,


And re-bestow each harvest of our wains.

MIDWINTER MORN.

N the cities there is a brisker hurry in the winter streets and a richer interchange of social life. To many the sight alone of the business and play of the city world is refreshing and absorbing, and the opportunities of amusement or teaching in concert and theatre are enough, without any intimate enlargement of acquaintance or personal share in the miscellaneous strife and pleasure. But there is little known of special beauty in the natural winter to the observer of city streets, while there are the most exciting and delightful pleasures in the country. There is nothing else so exhilarates and inspires the physical man as a clear, keen midwinter day on the hills. The snow is dazzling, the sky far and brightly blue, with a radiant mellow haze about the sun, the air most pure and living, and the trodden path rings with a crisp, metallic echo to the foot. The oxen, in exceeding leisure, sway their gross bulk in balanced step, and drag the heavy sled, whose bent wooden runners squeak in answering cadence. They look at you with great, serious eyes, and puff out long eddies of frosty breath. Their nostrils are fringed beneath with rime, and so are their dewlaps and their knees

from the moist warmth of the stables. The whole circuit of the hills belongs to sound ; the bark of a dog comes from far off across the valley ; and a tree falls, a mile away, with great echoes like a quarry-blast, and yet so different. The hemlocks and pines distinguish the forest with their cheerful color, and brighten the low-toned grays and purples of the deciduous trees. Here are the swift-leaping footprints of the rabbits, the busy steps of the hurrying fox, the queer little starry wrinkles where some bird has lit and hopped about, —all the original residents of the country have been out, one sees, enjoying the morning before him.

THE ELM IN WINTER.

OW admirable, how desirable, to resemble a tree in its winter phase ! There is a rare satisfaction in looking upon a strong, graceful elm, so broadly rooted and so loftily spreading to the sky, — the wonderful independence and agreement of its separate twigs in that symmetric whole, the fine harmonious tints of it against the sky and the snow, — and to think how composedly it rests, and how ready it will be, when spring comes, for another year's work. What would it be to one of us if he too could hibernate in such fashion ?

MIST AND MOONLIGHT.




THE weather is quite individual this winter ; there is an odd coquetry between the sun and the mists, the wind and the earth, and they fairly luxuriate in caprices whose surprise is mischievous to unprepared mortals. The other morning, when after a night of rain the sun broke forth "as a bridegroom from his chamber, as a strong man to run a race," there was a beautiful thing to be seen in the springy pastures, where beneath the warm rays the earth steamed in filmy mists that spread and skurried along the grass, and rose in light spirals, like the breath of earth-spirits, and drifted up and across to the water-courses, where they thickened to a fog. The sunlight, through these floating laces and broideries on the brown robes of earth, shone with a tender light that was rarely attractive, and I almost thought I should hear a tree-toad in the pine chirping about spring. But if there was no hylas to echo the name of the luckless youth at the fountain, there were a pair of crows, solemnly stalking down the hill and uttering an experimental caw now and then. It was an extreme contrast to the view of a few nights before from the hill-top. Then it was intensely cold and perfectly

still. The snow crunched and squeaked beneath the tread. All the city along the river was buried in a dense bank of fog, which, shot through by the street lights, shone luminous as a snowy pile of cloud at sunset, but as solid in its whiteness as that is light and aerial, — partaking of the earth, not of the ether. The nights are now splendid with moonlight. The three planets, Mars, Saturn and Jupiter, maintain their prominence in the sky, though their arch is changed to a vertical line, and each evening over Mars flicker the tremulous sisterhood of the Pleiades.

1880-81.

NIGHT.

HE night is at peace above, below ;
The star-beams leap in the crystal snow ;
The wind in the pines waits word to blow,
For the spirit that rules it well doth know
His hour to awake and go.

The land is a realm of fable, of dream ;
The white boughs droop on the frozen stream,
The lights on the ice-field dully beam,
And the spectres at every window teem —
For their hour to glide and gleam.

Above the moon is a cold blue star,
As blue and keen as a scimitar
That 's swung by a sheik in fiery war ;
It flashes its soul from spaces far
Like a fate to mould and mar.

The three high planets dull and fade ;
Red Mars, dim Saturn, faint to shade,
And lambent Jupiter grows grayed ;
The candid moon the heaven has made
Her realm where spells are laid.

The soul of me now is ill at ease ;
There is no kindness within the breeze,
No fellowship in the shuddering trees,
The mountains are far as the skies that freeze,
The heart is away from all these.

Oh this is a truce that is worse than fight,
This splendor so cold, so cruelly bright !
The shade of the storm that riots in might, —
Let it come and conquer the pitiless light
And the peace of the dead winter night !

A FUNERAL UNDER THE SNOW.



FOR a funeral on the border of Berkshire, forty and odd years ago, the neighbors turned out to break a road from the house to the graveyard, and had to tunnel from the highway to the house door, a distance of three or four rods. How much deeper the shade of solemnity must have rested, during the long prayer, the improving remarks, and the wailing measures of old China, —

“ Why should we mourn departing friends
Or shake at death’s alarms,” —

beneath the twilight of that entombed “ best room ” ! The bouquet of dry grasses on the black mantelpiece ; the framed obituary verses, with the willow and weeping young woman at their head ; the lithograph of the death of Tecumseh or the murder of Jane McRea ; the high-backed stiff chairs ; the dark, stained wall-paper, with temples and processions rioting in endless repetition ; the sense that the mourners were grieving in the little bedroom, whose half-open door let out the suppressed sound of sobs and long shuddering sighs ; the decorous gravity of the farmers and their good wives, whose habitually serious views of life predisposed them to “ taste the luxury of woe ; ” the curious alertness of

the sharp-featured gossips ; the ponderous moralizing of the parson ; the impressive presence of the dead shrouded within the coffin, — who that has taken part in this ceremony in the country will forget it? In beneath the drifts it might, with its contrasts, remind one of the burials in the catacombs, — as a thing done rather by stealth than of right.


FINITE INTO INFINITE.

If my bark sinks, 't is to another sea.

CHANNING.

My servant Death, with solving rite,
Pours finite into infinite.

EMERSON.

 HETHER that other sea has shores, a definable coast-line, havens where we would be, with convenient light-houses, — this is the anxious quest we entertain. Hamlet was but shallowly exercised about the mystery beyond, so long as he conceived of an “undiscovered country.” In that idea there is much room for expectation of food, shelter, rest, opportunity of labor and delight; and if also dread of dangers from man and beast and inclemency of clime, it is even in these respects nothing worse than man continually goes to face in the present phase of existence. But a sea, a waste of tossing waters, no promise of shore, and seamanship not among our accomplishments, — his need be a high serenity who contemplates such a consignment of his spiritual bark.

Perhaps the monster dread of the future to the soul that throbs and thrills and aspires and agonizes, feeling its sole self with a constant intensity, is lest it may not be itself at all beyond this dust. The traditions of the

churches give no hope for individuality. To be one of a numberless host in white robes with stars on their foreheads singing praises forever to an unknown God, — the idea presents a future of bathetic vapidness to which absolute annihilation would be preferable. Now that the traditions have so modified that a preacher does not lose his orthodox standing by the conception that spirits may praise God in other ways than by harps and hymns, — namely, in such work and beauty as they are severally fitted for, just as much hereafter as here, — there is an encouragement to accept even the doctrinal scheme with which it is allied to have free license for this hope. But after all, the Gospels offer us nothing that can be termed certainty. We are thrown back always upon the instincts of the soul. To the vivid mind of this age nothing is so impossible as the extinction of identity ; yet what a conceit this is in man ! that he should think his small concerns of an eternal consequence, and imagine an injustice in the disposition of the æons unless he may preserve his petty self ! “ Pour finite into infinite,” O Death ! but save John Smith !

SHADOW AND FEAR.




VERY-WAY ordinary experiences contain the elements of our most mysterious sensations.

That train of impressions which the night brings, with their branchings of mystery and alarm, draws from the most familiar storages its freight. The dark is known to us since the light was, but it is not to us as the light. Who can tell what he fears that should hinder him from crossing the graveyard by night? He knows each path and chain and stone ; he does not think of so vulgar a thing as lurking robbers ; he will stoutly deny a belief in ghosts, — but he cannot walk those paths when day is gone. What would he meet? Would the lichen-green old sandstones send their curious formal angels out to flap their bat-wings in his face? Would the young Englishman who died among strangers while on his travels for pleasure inquire of him what skipper sailed from Boston? Would poor Prudence, that was “struck by God’s will” at her wheel, distaff in hand, back early in the seventeen hundreds, rise and wring her lonely maiden hands behind the heavy tablet that records her fate? Would the old Captain with the naval battle ever going on above his head in solid rock, his effigied three-master at its side,

be seen there astride his iron cables, lighting his pipe with one of the inverted torches that flame inextinguishably on his monument? Would the pretty babes beneath unmemoried mounds float before him with the unutterable sweetness of their innocence on their tender lips? None of these would he expect to see, nor any other visitant, whether in the body or out of the body ; yet he would confess that —

“ O’er all there hung a shadow and a fear ;
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
That said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is haunted ! ”

THE PHANTOM TRAIN.

N the railway cars at night one often leans his face against the black pane, and gazes at the almost indistinguishable earth that passes like a shade. He sees just enough to build fancy on, — of bush and brake, of cottage and field ; but sees more plainly, yet still with vagueness, the phantom companion of the train rushing with even pace in noiseless unity with the rattle of its wheels. All the figures therein are phantasms. Before one sits a solid gentleman of “fair round belly with good capon lined,” who has picked his teeth, cleared his throat, consulted his watch, and damned the conductor with absolute mien all the way. His fellow in the other car, — just now his head was knocked off by a sudden wall, but the big stomach bobbed on undisturbed. The pretty girl who has been putting up her soft little hand to her frizzes every five minutes, and making soft little eyes even at the water-boy in default of a finer subject, — why, one sees the white birches gleam through the spectral form, the other side the glass, and a light in a wood-chopper’s shanty window blots her out utterly. That fellow behind who has been admiring the beauty’s plump arms, after his sort, and smelling

more alcoholic every time he leans forward to spit, — see his hand with the black bottle tilted in it drop off as the reflector of the meeting engine abolishes him altogether ! A little while of this reveals what transient simulacra we are ; there may be something essential, not in the procession of the shadowy duplicate, but the external show of us is as well in one as the other.

It is the smoking-car of a midnight express. There are four men in it, asleep, and another dreaming. A pair of boon companions have been tippling and joking and roaring out “tavern catches of Moll or Meg,” but now they are silent. A good-humored Irishman has curled himself over two seats with the parting assurance that, “if there’s a wink of sleep in this seat, begorra, I’ll have it !” In the last seat, by the stifling stove, snores a brakeman, — off duty to-night, it is plain. But the dreamer does not sleep. How dreary the hour and place ! His half-smoked cigar hangs between his fingers ; the monotonous rumble and clatter of the train, that fall into a hateful rhythm, noway so companionable as little Paul Dombey’s friend the clock, batter his ears with miserable iteration. The sameness is so pronounced that the train seems as stationary as a mill of trip-hammers, — but outside the shadow car moves swiftly on through rock and copse and champaign. The senseless forms that lumber up those ghostly seats have nothing to do with life. They are things that have been. But what is this figure that eyes me with dull, unhoping orbs, — this

pallid, drawn, avid countenance, so close to mine? Have I anything to do with its questions? Can the conductor answer them? Can I? And there is something of reproach, something of rebuke, in it. It seems to remember things I would forget, to anticipate things I will not see. Oh, what is this ghost I have summoned in the phantom train,—that even the mountain, the stream, the light of human homes in the inhuman gloom, will not dissipate or make relent?

THE PAGEANT.




HE world its treasures freely opes
For him that climbs and him that gropes ;
But he alone who scorns their hopes,
Lives on beyond the realm of graves.

The world all that it hath reveals,
But its great exit darkly seals ;
Hero or coward, — each one feels
In night the solemn clew that saves.

The world its battle still repeats,
Its hero conquers and retreats, —
No more in conquests than defeats
Abides the crown the victor wins.

The world its palling pageant shifts ;
Its actors change, its purpose drifts,
Its lances droop, its banner lifts :
It ends not, but fore'er begins.

MY SOUL AND I.

HEN once my soul and I
Meet face to face beneath the stars,
Shall then the patient sky
Behold me quarrel with its bars
So well secured?

Shall I have finished all
My common task so thoroughly,
That I may dare to call
The Master's sterner scrutiny,
As if inured?


Death — is it sure a boon,
Wherein God giveth higher life? —
But cowards would so soon
Escape the tumult and the strife
On earth endured.

Aye, let me still endure !
Though gnawing at my earnest heart
The pang that naught may cure,
The worm that never dies, hath part,
Deeply immured ;

Yet yearns the stronger soul, —
Yet upward urges and aspires !
And fuller, purer roll
The waves of its supernal fires
From passion cured.

Welcome the way of death !
The transient circumstance of earth
It joins at failing breath
With the unflawed celestial birth
To life assured !


LUSTRATION.

OMETIMES in a fortunate moment of pure thought, the world withdrawn, the soul becomes conscious not so much of itself as of an infinitely finer being that is in some ungraspable manner identified with it, — perhaps a forecast or vision of its spotless lustration in eternities that are now as truly as they will be, though so impossibly remote to our narrow sense. The partition between our emptiness and the exhaustless fulness of God is as clear and as impassable as the ether which unites and separates the universes.

AFTER THIS EARTH.

Calm's not life's crown, though calm is well.

Youth and Calm.

N one of his subtile philosophic poems Matthew Arnold concentrates in that line the thought of youth when it looks on death. Death is nothing, to the sense, but an end of action. It is blank and void cessation, — absolute and vacant rest. And rest is only the ideal of the aged or the world-weary ; no natural and healthy young heart ever longed for it ; nothing but disease of soul or body, or both, can give the beginning of life a kindred with its end. The pressure and harassment of work, the throng and tightening of temptations, the dissipation of hopes and the treachery of desires, and, above all, the inescapable pettiness of routine, the vulgarity and triviality of the things that consume our energies, — these bring to us, as life advances, a sense of the blessing of rest, even of the long rest. Each in his degree at some time attains a moment when he understands Macbeth's envy of Duncan, who "after life's fitful fever" slept so well. It is after that moment that the best or the worst work of life will be done, if its forces hold.

This is not a matter for argument. It is irrational, if reason were the factor, for any one to conceive of death as a rest, unless he thinks himself as transient as a midge, and as utterly ended at sunset. For him there is no horizon farther than the edge of earth, nor any share in the vast heritage of the worlds. For him calm *is* life's crown.

The resemblance borne by the great Wallenstein in Schiller's dramas to both Hamlet and Macbeth has often been noticed. But to our thinking there is very little of the Danish prince in him. The characterizing marks of Hamlet are not his irresolution, or his brooding habit, but his delicacy of conscience, his worship of truth and his moral indignation. These last are not traits of Wallenstein, nor were they of Macbeth; but the Scottish usurper had those other traits, and so had Schiller's Wallenstein. Macbeth, however, had behind him the strength of his wife's great nature — "Infirm of purpose! Give me the dagger!" she cries. The Countess with her slurs does not supply this place to Wallenstein, but in the superstition of the stars he matches Macbeth's faith in the Forres witches. And the melancholy turning over and over of vexing thoughts in the mind is habitual with both Scot and Austrian. Note the wonderful pathos of Wallenstein's utterance, when he learns of the death of the spotless Max: —

"See him again! Oh never, never again!
He is the fortunate; his life is ended;

For him there is no longer any future,
And fate for him no farther treachery spins.
His life lies foldless, shining pure behind him ;
No darkness spots it. No unhappy hour
Knocks for him now, some fell misfortune bringing ;
Far has he gone from wish and fear ; belongs
No more to the deceitful, fickle planets.
Oh it is well with him ; but who shall say
What the next hour, so darkly veiled, brings us ? ”

Is it not like an echo of Macbeth’s cry, different
though the circumstances of its utterance were ?—

“ Duncan is in his grave ;
After life’s fitful fever he sleeps well.
Treason has done his worst ; nor steel, nor poison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing
Can touch him further.”

“ Far has he gone from wish and fear.” That is the ideal of peace to the man of antagonisms and ambitions, and to the average human being in his degree it is the same. If to gain this state were only “ to lie in cold obstruction, and to rot,” and that last breath were “ the be-all and the end-all here,” it would be even comfortable to the natural contemplation. But then there remains, as Hamlet says, “ the dread of something after death.” The sensuous Claudio was not shocked at the physical closure of death, but at the possible spiritual doom, sending

“ — the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling region of thick-ribbèd ice ;
To be imprisoned in the viewless winds,

And blown with restless violence round about
The pendent world ; or to be worse than worst
Of those that lawless and incertain thought
Imagine howling : 't is too horrible !
The weariest and most loathèd worldly life
That age, ache, penury and imprisonment
Can lay on nature is a paradise
To what we fear of death."

This passage shows that Shakespeare had read Dante, and knew the dread circles of the Inferno. What a wonderful reference is that to the fate of Francesca da Rimini and her lover, —

"Borne upward on the dreadful whirlwind light" !

But without annihilation, how can we contemplate the freedom from wish or fear? Only in two ways, — one a fine sublimation that shall separate the spirit from all its past, and make it but a luxurious and empty emanation, without relation to humanity, without true identity ; or a mere negation of existence, like that led by the shades of the ancient world seen by Dante, a Hades of colorless phantoms, with inoperative memories and no anticipations. Is it this last, or is it the absorption of the first, or the blank nothing of the materialist which breathes in Wallenstein's words, so tender in their thought of the dead?

THE WAY TO HEAVEN.




HEAVEN is open every day ;
In night also
He that would wend his upward way
May surely go.
There is no wall to that demesne
Where God resides ; nor any screen
To hide the glories of that scene, —
If man will know.

The ladder which the Hebrew saw
Whenas he slept,
From earth God never doth updraw,
But still hath kept ;
And angels ever to and fro
On errands swiftly glide and glow, —
For love above, for love below,
Its rounds have stept.

Thereon the saint doth daily mount
Above the stars,
Caring nowhit to take account
Of earthly bars ;
Since well 't is known to such as he
There are no guards but pass him free ;
He hath the watchword and the key,
In peace, or wars.

THE ART OF LIVING.

“S the material of a carpenter is wood, of a statuary brass ; so of the art of living, the material is each man's own life.” This sentence of the quiet wisdom of Epictetus — so reasonable that it seems scarcely wisdom at all, since anybody, without being a philosopher, might have said it — expresses one of the truths we are longest in learning, and which many never learn at all. We search everywhere but in ourselves for the building of our life. To this source we fly for happiness, to that for strength, to the other for grace. Would we be merry ? Then a bottle of wine, a party of good fellows, an opera bouffe or a minstrel show. Would we worship ? Let us go to church and hear the parson. Would we be fed ? Then hurry with that venison ! fetch us a truffle ! an ice and the meringues here ! champagne ? of course ! Would we be beautiful ? Then balm for the complexion, gloves for the hands and simply miraculous suits. All that we have or hope thus depends upon things without us ; and our life, which should be something sacred, strong, outgrowing, is a mere contemptible creature of circumstance. Wood from this

quârter, hay from that, stubble from another, here a borrowed band of gold, and there a flawed ruby or emerald, — it is not thus that the art of living results. It is not an accumulation from without, but a growth from within.

GONE FROM THE GLORY OF THE EARTH.



ONE from the glory of the earth
And from its holy duty lost ;
Thy life abridged in ripest worth,
Thy heart checked at the height of cost, —
What can atone for this rude fate?
What can amerce this cruel draught?
Does thy strong spirit long and wait
Until the bitter drops be quaffed,
Until the pause of grief be come
And deeply gnaws the weary pang,
The desolation of the home,
The sorrow that no knell hath rang?
O soul of wife and mother, rest !
Peace to thee, peace ! — Is not God best?

THE POWER OF MUSIC.



HERE are many promoting agents of the belief in immortality among our human experiences ; our affections are chief of these, then our conviction that our souls were made for more than they can ever attain here, our feeling that life is a mockery if it stops with the grave, our sense — mere inkling though it is — that we have a claim upon the Higher Soul that so constantly reminds us of his claim on us. Among the instruments of our hope music has an influence that when we feel it most deeply seems incommensurable. There is to one who is deeply moved by music a power in it that thrills him in a way that no other outer incitation approaches. The impression of a poem, of a powerful story of life, of a great dramatic personation, are not to be compared with the impression of a great symphony. The others can all be written about, and their meaning approximately set down in words, but before a work like Beethoven's C minor one feels that language is powerless. There are those who hold that music does not contain thought, but only feeling ; but this is as if one should say that love, hate, ambition, despair, hope, fear, aspiration, have no thought. Let us not juggle with words in this

way. Thought is in all emotions ; the heart that we fable as the seat of feeling is not a valvular mechanism like the physical organ, but the complete enfolder and outgiver of the inmost self. When one speaks from the heart, he speaks from all he is, — his best and worst, his true completeness. And music is the wondrous perfection, the highest height of that expression, — a reach so far above the daily level that only by transcending earthly capacity could he interpret its burden. There is something profound in that andante of the C minor symphony that stirs me with untranslatable pain. It seems to say that there is a boundary impassable, a struggle unending, a reaching to the verge, a glimpse, once and again, of the eternal light, a falling back, a striving again, a touch from the divine hand upon the brow, and a perpetual hope singing through the darkness. But how feeble these words, how mighty the master's deathless utterance !

BEETHOVEN'S "SONATE PATHETISCHE."



MYSTIC music of the stormy chords !
O restless surges of the questioning heart !
Passion unutterable in weak words —
Despairing woe, aspiring bliss — they part,
They mingle, they contend ; now doubt, now faith, —
Now fear, now love, o'errule the struggling soul ;
No tender thought but swiftly knoweth scathe
From bitter agony of human dole ;
Wild moans of sorrow break upon each dream
Of happiness, delirious and brief,
And wailings still are wafted o'er the stream
Whose murmurs gladden till we hear that grief ; —
And yet the end is triumph, — lo ! the wings
Of singing seraphs sweep th' aspirant strings !

ALL MUSIC HAS ITS PLACE.

Warble, child ! make passionate my sense of hearing.

DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO.



HE fantastical Spaniard in whose person young Shakespeare made mock at some language-mangling disciple of "Euphues" Lyly, now and then hit the mark with real felicity ; and it was a happy phrase with which he coaxed his little page to his "concolinel." When the spirit lags with the day's burden and heat ; when disappointment mounts and disgust crowds ; when cynicism with sly poison steals into the heart, and "man delights us not, nor woman either," — then there is a spell in music worth invoking. Saul found it so when ruddy David played the harp before him ; and that warped and powerful brain came back to health for a time as the charm of Nature in hill and stream, the sweetness of human affection and the exaltation of worship breathed from the strings and the voice of the poet. And even the same, in their mean and thin capacity, is the silly melancholy of the Armados cleared by the power of a child's light music. All music has its place, and those to whom it is a comfort and cheer. For one person's various moods the same strains do not serve ; a lulling gondellied or

a gay song is often better than all the grand joy of Bach or the religious elevation of Mendelssohn ; not in the same hour can Schumann's passion and Wagner's tyranny of sound be equally appreciated ; and

“ — one can't bear Strauss when his nature is cloven
To its deeps within deeps by the stroke of Beethoven.”

And so it is not at a concert that one who is sensitive to contrasts may say “ Make passionate my sense of hearing ; ” but rather “ Bestow on me a critical endurance.” A great concert is like a great dinner, but in some respects worse ; for one can eat and drink as little at the dinner as his appetite or his judgment may decide, but at a concert he must hear the medley through. This does not apply to the rendering of a Handel oratorio, or the Passion-music of Sebastian Bach, which thrill, uplift, sublimates the soul in one crescent influence.


A THOUGHT OF SCHUMANN.

AUFSCHWUNG — WARUM? — GRILLEN.



GAINST my heart the passion flood-waves beat,
My hot and throbbing heart with fire responds !
Here then in tumult wild of soaring sounds
My heart untrammelled its relief shall meet.
But oh how sweet, how pure ! transcendent peace
Falls on my soul as holy light from heaven !
Who knoweth whence this wingèd rest is given ?
I faint, I tremble in the strange release.
Why falls this grace ? ay, wherefore unto me
Descends the glory of this new strong joy ?
I revel in its triumph of sweet glee, —
Bathe in its blessed air without annoy !
— Anguish awhile, but blest the future grows :
Beneath the mould springs not the glowing rose ?

THE CHIPPEWAY STANDARDS.

USIC " is supposed by the most of those who share American or European civilization to be a definable thing, something at least which they can understand, and on which their dictum will be accepted. This is a pleasing deception, for in truth we have no more a standard of the musical than of the beautiful ; and as the women of the Niger could very reasonably pity the ugly paleness of Mungo Park, so they might lament the dreadful noises of our voices, violins and pianos when compared with the sweet simplicity of their own hide drums and cane fifes. A circle of Chippeways betting their last cent on the little joker (in their case a stone under one of four buckskin mittens) are always cheered by what they call music, — somebody drumming on a bit of skin stretched over the end of a paint keg, or blowing on a willow flute, or keeping up a rising and falling wave of vowels without any particular meaning. Take the gray old medicine man, sitting there in his square blanket, — which he wears by no means so squeamishly as to hide the strong proportions of his breast and legs, — take him out of his wilderness of beach and forest and drop him in a box at the Grand Opera, with the

great orchestra in full blare, Gerster or Kraus or Kellogg at her height of achievement, amid all the scenic gorgeousness, — do you think the savage would feel the music, — song of Marguerite, plaint of Traviata, misere-re of Leonora, or whatever it might be? The old savage would look on, imperturbable, and go back to his “tum-tum-tum, — we-ha-yo-ha, ha-ye-ha-wo, — we-yo-ha, ha-ha-wo,” with undisguised relief. From which I deduce the valuable lesson: Never attempt to tell your neighbor what you think you know about music, — he may be a Chippeway.

THE DONKEY AND THE BOBOLINK.



DONKEY that had just munched a particularly spiny burr-thistle, and was discontentedly flapping the flies off his nose with his characteristic ears, observed on the other side of the fence a bobolink, a-tiptoe on a meadow lily, and joyously pouring forth his melodious medley. The donkey regarded this as too exasperating. "Ha-a-a-agh! He-ha-a-a-agh! Do you call that music? Do you call yourself a singer? For my part, I think you're a loafer, — sitting on meadow-lilies, indeed! Why don't you stand on the ground, as honest folks do? I can't see what there is interesting in that meadow, anyway. Are there any thistles there? If there were you'd smell of 'em, instead of eat 'em! Bah! And then, as I said in the first place, what ridiculous singing! All 'roulades' and 'cadenzas,' 'trills' and 'arpeggios,' and such hifalutin! For my part, give me a good, square, honest bray!" And as there was no other performer at hand, he gave it himself. Yet there were a few people who still thought that the bobolink sang passably well.

THE DANCE.



THE eminent picturesqueness of the dance may furnish a profound pleasure to one whose work is serious and absorbing. To such a spectator the mazes of the waxed floor are a web of wasteful folly, thought on as he thinks on the restless seething of the fatal flood of life. But that is not the way to regard it. To him it should be a spectacle, abstracted from any reality of its participants, as if it were a vision of fairies, or ephemera waving their filmy wings over the waters which were their birthplace, and into which they fall when their bright ecstasy is past. Meanwhile what so entrancing as the changing figures, the glowing colors, the magnetic swirl of the silken trains, the flutter of the light ribbons, the flash of jewels and eyes brighter than jewels, and all the sweetness of girlish beauty moving to festal music seen and heard as in a magic chamber, — like a single glimpse of eternal soulless joy !

AFTER THE BALL.



HE gay and giddy rout consumes the night,
The thrilling music thralls the fevered throng ;
And folly gathers here the fatal blight
That wastes the heart and brain in dalliance long,
That wears the hurried pulse to frenzied might,
And weakens life, that never is too strong.
Souls sleep within the spell of swift delight,
And this the world counts joy, but we a wrong.
Rather for us, dear wife, beneath blue sky,
The buoyant rapture of the forest song,
The wild bird's warble and our hearts' reply,
Our wedded love's eterne communion high ;
For we to farthest heaven our faith prolong,
And at God's throne our holy hope shall lie !

ART'S DEEPER MEANINGS.




ALL music is deeper than the musician's craft, — it partakes of his innermost self, and reveals more than he ever intended. All art—to follow the thought farther—is more than the artist consciously knows. A painter lately said to me: "We are always surprised at the things you writers find in our work. I paint this picture with the mere purpose of experimenting in a certain way of laying on pigments; you see it, and straightway evolve from it a story, a poem, a work of pure imagination, nothing of which ever entered my head." Yet the imagined meaning is often as true as if the painter had intended it. His nature compelled him to try his experiment in pigments this way and no other, on this subject and no other; and the higher spirit inside him guided his brush or his palette knife to paint a poem, while he aimed only at an exercise.

WITH A COPY OF SHAKESPEARE.




HIS is the deep profound that imports man ;
His shoals, his rapids, all are charted here ;
There is no joy of voyage and no fear
That is not bodied in this mighty plan.
He knew where the sweet springs of love began,
And whence the fires of hate and horror peer,
What wakens merriment, and how appear
The raging passions that bewitch and ban.
Herein behold how nobly souls may mount,
How basely fall ; and see as well how sweet
The common rill of human life may run.
It is at once the ocean and the fount ;
The compass of our triumph and defeat ;
The heart of earth, the splendor of the sun.

STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS.

NE may not boast of having overcome temptation after it has passed, and left him yet wavering, — it was but the departure of occasion that rescued him. A week, a day, nay, an hour, might have plunged him into sin. Not his will, but his vacillation saved him ; not his strength, but his weakness, — indecision of passion, not determination of principle. Many a man owes his reputation for virtue to his weakness of will ; many men owe their vices to strength of resolution.

CHARITY.

HO knows his nature's hidden ill, —
Its fierce desire, its mordant rage,
Its youthful fires, its bitter age, —
The poison of his nobler will ;

Who knows his nature's inner good, —
Its eager strife, its soaring hope,
Its springs of life, its sunny cope,
The purview of his heavenly food ; —

He well should reach a hand of grace
To those that err and fall by the way,
Captive of evil, beggared of love.

He well should spare the haughty face,
Nor boast above their night his day
Gloried by loving, hostaged above.

GRAVE MEDITATIONS.



HERE is something about Schliemann's diggings in old Mycenæ that gives us pause. These Argive men and women, who gave their bodies to be burned according to the custom of their world, and to be entombed with their costliest robes and jewels and with the goblets and patens of their tables or the swords and shields of their warfare, thought of a perpetual rest for their tenements of clay. In that age, as now, man cherished the thought of a grave as a shrine of memory, though only so far as the great were concerned, — for the people beneath them, quick decay of fire and unremembered name. In a measure these famous Greeks, if indeed the bones were theirs, had their desire. For hundreds of years their tombs were as much “lions” in Mycenæ as those which headless still ramp above the narrow gateway ; and then for many hundreds more they were forgotten. But now a curious German, whose very race was not when these bones were dressed in flesh and moved by living souls, has invaded their sanctuaries of repose, and given their contents to alien curiosity.

Why do we care so much for the fate of the worn-out shells we have abandoned? Why cherish the

transient interest of a mere generation or two? After the last of earth, Osoul, —

“Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon this fading mansion spend?”

To keep our memory of kindred, do we need the ceremonial of preserving so much dust, that shortly shall become a meaningless incumbrance? It is a sort of postponement of that second death of earth, whence there shall be “no resurrection in the minds of men;” and we do not feel so sure of immortality but that this delay seems something gained. The affections are not philosophical, and do not close their concern with the living presence of their object. For this and other reasons, often superstitious, the care for the dead has been observed in all ages. Many peoples have given their dead tombs hewn in the enduring rock; many have burned them, and with religious care bestowed their ashes in solemn urns, placed in costly sepulchres; many have committed them to earth, as we do now; nations at the extremes of culture have preserved them with drugs in elaborate cerements; and often the mighty have lain in superb temples, emulous of eternity.

But none of these has any advantage above the Parsees, the bones of whose dead the fowls of the air pick clean upon the towers of silence; or above those North American tribes that expose the bodies of the departed upon trees, or rude frames lifted from the reach of the lower beasts, and subject only to aerial

visitations. He that is laid beneath green sod has scarcely to boast beyond him whose

“ — heavy-shotted hammock shroud
Drops in his vast and wandering grave.”

Time spoils the muniments of the dead, as of the living, whether they be simple or extravagant. The red man who was placed sitting in the earth, faced eastward, with his pot and hollowed stone and bruising-pestle, or his bows and arrows beside him, rests there no longer than till the white man's plow comes to strike his skull into the light of new centuries. The Egyptian prince or priest, wrapped in cloths and gums, and with the stern sentences of the Book of the Dead inscribed upon his swathings and encasements, is hauled forth by irreverent and curious hands, and becomes far off a spectacle for a gaping populace, or — grimmest irony of all in the ages' *Danse Macabre* — fuel for a Nile valley steamer's engine. Ancestral burial-grounds are reft of their gravestones for door-steps, or to floor the oven in which the bread of the living is baked, and the plow obliterates their humble mounds ; but here is Agamemnon's slab shown in an Athenian museum, and the coffin of a Pharaoh in London.

Even cinerary disposition affords no assurance of respect. “To be knaved out of our graves,” says Sir Thomas Browne, “to have our skulls made drinking-bowls and our bones turned into pipes, to delight and sport our enemies, are tragical abominations escaped

in burning burials." But of all the Etrurian urns, where is there one that holds the ashes that it was wrought for? The Etruscan of three thousand years ago is of no more respect than our modern Thomas Paine, whose skeleton, hawked around from place to place, crumbled to inconsequential dust among rubbish. These Greeks of Schliemann's finding were doubly buried, — incinerated and inhumed, — yet what availed such pains? Verily, Sir Thomas was right, — "to subsist in bones, and be but pyramidally extant, is a fallacy in duration. Vain ashes! which in the oblivion of names, persons, times and sexes, have found unto themselves a fruitless continuation, and only arise unto late posterity as emblems of mortal vanities, antidotes against pride, vainglory and madding vices."


IS THIS THE STORY OF THE SOUL?



SCRAP from out God's open hand
Let fall and floating on the wind,
Currents of tropic or of pole
Crowding before, pushing behind,
Deflecting it o'er sea and land
Without a course, without a goal —

Is this the story of the soul,
A waif of waste upon the strand,
Carelessly tossed, as mad or blind
Its worker was, to whelm so grand
And rich a jewel in the roll
Of elemental wave and wind?

MYSTERIES OF DREAMS.

E QUINCEY says that opium alone can illustrate the potentiality of the imagination in dreams ; he wrote before the drug of hash-eesh, the *bhang* of the Arabian Nights, was familiar to those who tamper with their souls in dread intoxicants. But the delirium of the undrugged brain sometimes lacks little of the tremendous character which De Quincey ascribes to opium visions. He tells of the magnifying of real and common things, the feeling of unsoundable despondency, the indescribable prolongation of time and extension of space,—as extraordinary elements in his visions. Yet all these may characterize the dreams of fever, and with a most singular counterfeit of system and actuality. A sick man, for instance, lies in bed, and half waking bethinks him of a drink of water. He feels himself arise, pass through the door of his chamber and enter the corridor. At once the bare walls stretch out in endless and changing vistas ; he walks beneath Grecian colonnades for miles, down monstrous rows of inscrutable sphinxes, amid the massive desolations of Tadmor or Baalbec, through the ruinous closures of Aztec temples, under the statued caves of Elephanta, or—for the

changes of vision are as incongruous as they are immense—along narrow alleys shut in by lofty warehouses, or sometimes through avenues of palms or groves of pine ; all Nature and all architecture in a phantasmagoric procession with him for his little swallow of water. And reaching a stairway after an infinity of æons, it expands and descends like illimitable Egyptian pyramids, one upon the other, until they open into a mighty unfathomable maelstrom, which in its turn becomes the rugged sulphurous pit of a volcano descending into the very heart of the globe. This is very like some of De Quincey's experiences, but it is the veritable record of a fever patient who had taken no opiates or kindred drugs.

The grotesque and horrible mingle oddly in such derangements of the brain. The same dreamer found himself climbing with much labor up a precipitous mountain, accompanied by a very beautiful lady with whom he had a casual acquaintance in real life. There was a joyous tumult of thousands of people on the top of this mountain, and it appeared that they were erecting a monument to some person unknown. The lady proposed to help, and did so by the simple means of breaking out from the ledge a fragment of several tons' weight, and in the most natural way tossing it to the top of the monument, where it immediately fitted in excellent shape. The dreamer followed the lady's example with equal success, and this indeed seemed the fit and proper way to build memorials ; and his mind went vaguely wandering in speculation

as to the long delay usual in erecting memorials to departed greatness, and as to the chance of bringing this short and easy method into general use.

In a moment the lady, the merry crowd, the mountain, were not, and the first awful trump of the day of judgment was sounding ; the skies wore a livid, ashen hue, and limned upon their vault, in place of sun or stars, which had fled away because there was no place for them, were gigantic figures of human and bestial shapes, and all the land was crowded with men and women and children, some screaming, some dumb and white with dismay, a few serene and happy, and some curious, and noting down the phenomena and the incidents attending them. This was the dreamer's part ; and as the figures shifted every now and then, as by some kaleidoscopic trick, he strove to organize a corps of observation, to regard each quarter of the heavens. There was nothing stranger, as the dreamer remembers this astonishing scene, than the curious irrelevance of the commonplace houses and barns and churches ; the people were about as he would have expected.

But swifter than a weaver's shuttle this scene, too, vanished, and the dreamer was in a great theatre, packed tier above tier with human beings, who were witnessing a series of tableaux vivants. There was announced as the closing picture, "The Equality of Man." The stage was set for a palace interior, and from a stately portal, in the blaze of many lights, there stepped a weirdly consorted pair, arm in arm. One was a woman of unearthly beauty, robed with con-

summate elegance, adorned with jewels, and with the mien of a sovereign. Her companion, upon whose arm she leaned, was a woman also, — a colossal negress of the most hideous type. As the two appeared the lady turned her splendid face upon the black, and leered; the other grinned; and the house broke into tempestuous laughter, — from pit to roof, one horrible rush and din of laughter. Even while they laughed, the lady's face fell away into the corruption of the grave, and all her garments and adornments were filthy rags, and the negro mask became a grinning skull with bale fire gleaming in the hollows where its eyes had been, — and the chorus of the theatre became a vast volume of hisses and shrieks and thunders of anger. The dreamer awoke with that sight and those sounds thrilling every nerve, and "cried aloud." There is not sweetness only in sleep, but, as Henry Vaughan says,

" — horror doth creep
And move on with the shades."

Once in the morning, — "when dreams are truest," according to the proverb, — the Saunterer dreamed. It seemed that he was with his dearest friend upon an endless journey, whereon they were never to pause, never to turn back. It was not certain that they were never to part, yet this weighed upon them not a whit, and the Saunterer was so pleasantly occupied with the things by the way that he did not know when his friend left him; yet suddenly he found himself alto-

gether alone. It was in a vast stony plain, and he would willingly have retraced his steps to where their ways had parted ; for now he remembered that he had heard a sigh, and a voice faintly calling upon him, while yet the land was happy with roses and waving meadows. But behind him had arisen a precipitous range of hills, and he journeyed on, mountains leaping from the plain, streams broad and swift sweeping across it, but nothing stopping his destined progress. This was not wonderful to the dreamer, but there was one thing that he wondered at,—it was that every little while he saw a figure like himself beside the way ; now sitting upon a rock, now upon the limb of a tree, again lying among flowers,—never in motion. Each of these simulacra, as he passed, the traveller flung upon his shoulders, until, staggering with the heavy burden, he was forced to cast them down. He placed them around him in a circle, and by some phantasmagoric sleight his spirit seemed to enter each in turn, and to debate which might be the real embodiment of himself. In each new avatar he beheld his original body, sitting like an image of death in the midst of the doubles ; in none could he make his soul at home, for in each the most hateful qualities stabbed or stifled it. Presently the terrible conclave burst into a frantic dance ; and torn and tortured in the wild rout, sometimes in one and sometimes in another of the evil forms, at last, in extremity of agony, he awoke.

INVOCATION.



TERNAL beauty, dawn within my soul !
Illumining the dark wherein I grope
And find no comfort else, nor any hope
Among the scattered shards of that dead whole
Which was my fond ideal. Shine therein,
And bid my dead revive, my buried rise,
My fragments gather, and the high emprise
Of truth return, and me to God rewin !
For now in boding strife my forces waste,
The shadow of what shall be dims the glow
Of all that is, and good itself is ill.
Thy rays are bright without, but I am faced
To dungeon glooms. Oh pierce them through,
and show
Thy holy light, and all my hunger fill !



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